



There is no way to sugar-coat our transportation crisis. If we do not invest in long-term, comprehensive regional transportation and transit improvements shortly, the quality of life for residents of the Greater Toronto region, as well as our economic prosperity, will be in serious jeopardy: costs of congestion will soar from \$6 billion to \$15 billion per year by 2030;<sup>20</sup> smog will contribute to tens of thousands of premature deaths;<sup>21</sup> and we will see worsening social outcomes for people who are aging, live with low incomes, or live in areas underserved by transit. This future is barreling towards us like a freight train.

### Challenges

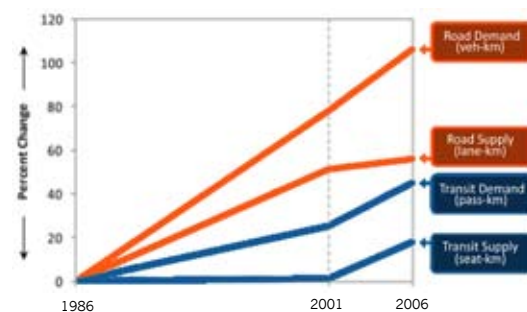
Few people have not confronted the traffic jams, crowded subways and lack of active transit options that characterize our transportation system, and the data

backs up their frustrations:

- since 1990, the growth in demand for roads and transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) has been about double the growth of supply<sup>22</sup> (Figure 1);
- the performance of the region's transportation system has deteriorated noticeably in the last 20 years – the Greater Toronto region now has the longest commute times of any city region in North America;<sup>23</sup> and
- these negative trends in transportation performance are accelerating,<sup>24</sup> going from bad to worse at an increasing rate (Figure 2).

The GTHA's population is poised to increase 49.5% by 2036,<sup>25</sup> so these trends and costs will only accelerate.

**Figure 1: 1986-2006 GTHA Transportation Demand and Supply Trends\***



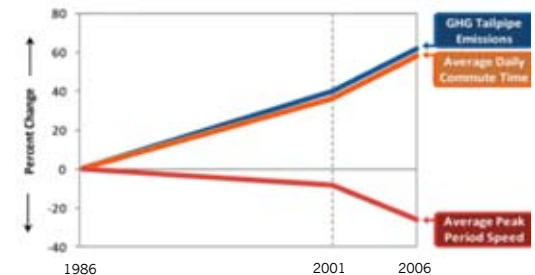
\*The data points are graphed for 1986, 2001 and 2006 only, to show changes in net trends before and after 2001. Travel fluctuations between these points are not shown; for example, transit supply in seat-km increased in the years following 1986 but then declined to 2001, showing a negligible net gain over the 15-year period. Similarly, road travel demand has fluctuated above and below the trend lines, reflecting economic conditions (with a downward fluctuation in 2008/9 for example), but the overall trend continues to climb.

Source: IBI Group, based on Transportation Tomorrow data and GTHA road/transit data sources.

### Strengths

In 2008, Metrolinx, the provincial agency charged with coordinating GTHA transportation planning and delivery, unveiled The Big Move. This regional plan will create a comprehensive rapid transit network to put over 80% of

**Figure 2: 1986-2006 Transportation Performance Trends\***



\*As noted for Figure 1, trend fluctuations between the three data points are not shown, in order to emphasize the changes in the overall net trend lines before and after 2001.

Source: IBI Group, based on Transportation Tomorrow data and model runs.

GTHA residents within two kilometres of rapid transit and make region-wide improvements to roads, highways and pedestrian and cycling facilities.<sup>26</sup> Unanimously approved by Metrolinx’s Board of Directors (then made up of GTHA mayors and regional chairs), the plan promises to decrease average commute times and tailpipe emissions, integrate transit fares, triple the length of rapid transit lines and introduce leading edge information systems to inform travel choices.

The Big Move is a living plan, built to flex and evolve as circumstances change, without sacrificing its original objectives and costs. In the spring of 2011, the plan was altered to accommodate changed City of Toronto transit priorities but, even so, retains key regional projects (several of which are already underway), including the Eglinton-Scarborough Crosstown. The Province has committed to pay just over \$10 billion of the plan’s projected \$50 billion capital cost (in 2008 dollars), but we are short \$40 billion to keep the plan on track.

The Summit issued a strong call for federal, provincial and municipal governments to resolve their political and jurisdictional challenges and work with Metrolinx to implement the regional transportation plan in a holistic way that will serve the interests of the entire region. Better political and public dialogue is needed to broaden awareness

of the need to implement The Big Move and to identify and galvanize support for an acceptable mix of sustainable sources to fund its implementation.

## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

### 1. Governments should explore and commit to long-term funding tools designated for transit and transportation, including a federal-provincial funding agreement.

Canada is the only OECD country without a long-term national plan for transit and transportation. Summit participants called for a federal-provincial strategy and long-term funding designated for transit and transportation. Recognizing the government’s fiscal constraints, they suggested a diverse portfolio of funding sources, but agreed that the federal government should make a long-term commitment of \$1-2 billion per year designated to help fund GTHA transit and transportation.

CivicAction has identified 12 potential funding sources<sup>27</sup> for consideration. Political and government leaders should join in the growing debate about these and other potential funding sources and help drive the discussion towards a consensus that Metrolinx can rely on when creating its long-term investment strategy, due in June 2013. Our consultations suggest that people are open to considering new funding options, but need to be informed about each

**Figure 3: Potential sources for additional GTHA transit/transportation funding**

Source	Net Additional Revenue to GTHA
1. Road Tolls on GTHA Freeways (400 series highways and municipal controlled-access highways)	\$1 – 2 B/year
2. Regional Gas/Diesel Fuel Tax	\$1 – 2 B/year
3. Commercial Parking Levy	\$1 – 2 B/year
4. Regional Sales Tax	\$1 – 2 B/year
5. High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes or Express Lanes on GTHA Freeways	\$400 – 800 M/year for Express Lanes \$200 – 400 M/year for HOT Lanes
6. HST Revenue from Gas/Diesel Sales Tax (Revenue dedicated partially or fully to GTHA transit)	\$400 – 600 M/year
7. Central Area (C.A.) Congestion Levy on private vehicles entering Planning District 1, 6:30 am–6:30 pm Monday – Friday	\$250 - \$500 M/yr
8. Vehicle Registration Fee (Varies with vehicle GHG emission levels; replaces existing provincial single-value fee)	\$200 – 400 M/year
9. Value Capture Levy (Provides revenue from higher property values/taxes in areas served by higher-order transit)	\$50 – 100 M/year
10. Utility Bill Levy	\$50 – 100 M/year
11. Employer Payroll Tax in Areas with Higher-Order Transit Service	\$40 – \$80 M/year
12. National Federal-Provincial Transit Strategy (Similar to Ontario’s former funding formula, but based on a national federal/provincial agreement for steady, long-term funding)	\$1 – 2 B/year

Source: Irwin, N. & Bevan, A. (July 2010). Time To Get Serious: Reliable Funding Sources for GTHA Transit/Transportation Infrastructure. Prepared for CivicAction.

option's likely effectiveness and impacts; the options that seem the least popular are those that are least understood<sup>28</sup> (Figure 3). Summit participants suggested that residents will consider paying more through one or more of these options if the funds are earmarked for transit and transportation and the overall funding burden is shared equitably.

## **2. Leaders from every sector must help drive broad public support for the regional transportation plan and stimulate informed public discussion of financing tools.**

Metrolinx may be the logical driver of a mass public information and consultation campaign, but business, labour, academic and non-profit leaders must support it by making clear that improving regional transit and transportation is crucial to the success of their people and organizations. Strong, informed and committed multi-sector leadership will bolster public

The Summit suggested that Metrolinx promote a **'region-building transit brand'** to engage influential city-builders, employers and other audiences and to create a sense of collective ownership of the regional plan, highlighting how it will bring about the following:

- a) **Economic benefits:** Outline the benefits for each demographic. For example, business owners will gain more cost-effective transfers of goods and improved employee mobility, while seniors will have easier access to rapid transit.
- b) **Regional connectivity:** People will have expanded and faster options to move between their homes, jobs, schools and other pursuits in an integrated regional system.
- c) **Social concerns:** Safer, more reliable transportation, better quality of life and more equitable access are unifying themes that most drivers, transit riders, residents, pedestrians or cyclists will appreciate.
- d) **Environment quality:** Implementing the plan will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, helping to reduce global warming and improve public health.

decision makers working to advance the regional transportation plan and give Metrolinx another source of innovative thinking on everything from effective communications to new financing tools.

## **3. Metrolinx, with support from its municipal and other partners, should create a significant and continuing public information campaign and consultations to engage public support and input.**

There won't be broad support for implementing the regional transportation plan, let alone funding it, until GTHA residents appreciate how much it will benefit them individually and what their role is in bringing about the improvements. Metrolinx and its partners should bring the plan to life through the media and ongoing regional and targeted information campaigns, painting a picture of the planned improvements and responding to the question 'what's in it for me' when it profiles the benefits.

An informed public can help planners and decision makers as they evaluate transportation plans. Summit participants suggested that past transportation planning has lacked transparency, accountability and credibility. Metrolinx could avoid this by presenting the region with: its long-term strategic plan, presented in writing and visually; an assured statement of upfront and projected costs; annual reporting mechanisms; comprehensible metrics for evaluation; and an open discussion of taxpayer return-on-investment.

Metrolinx and its partners must facilitate ongoing forums to inform, receive and respond to feedback from residents, workers, employers and travelers as the transportation plan is implemented. Informing and listening to the public will also make it easier to engage people in a productive debate about funding options. The United Kingdom's Transport for London and the Utah Transportation Authority are but two examples of how to successfully generate public awareness and public support for tough funding decisions.

See the related backgrounder, *Keeping on Track: A Reality Check*, prepared for the Greater Toronto Summit 2011 at: [www.civicaaction.ca/publications](http://www.civicaaction.ca/publications)