



**RE.
Greater Golden
Horseshoe
Transportation Plan
and the regional benefit
of Waterfront LRT
expansion**

**TO.
Ontario Ministry of
Transportation**

***Minister
Caroline Mulroney***

and

***Deputy Minister
Laurie LeBlanc***

Dear Minister Mulroney and Deputy Minister LeBlanc,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the emerging Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) Transportation Plan. The Toronto waterfront is a gift to the whole city, but for residents, workers, and visitors to participate in everything it has to offer, people from the around the region need to reach it. The Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA) shares your vision of moving people safely, seamlessly, and accessibly throughout the entire region, and especially in the Toronto downtown. When released, the GGH Transportation Plan should recognize that the Waterfront East LRT should be funded, planned, and built immediately; that the Waterfront East LRT is interdependent to, and mutually supportive of, the Ontario Line; and that planning and design work on the LRT should be accelerated. Recognizing this project as a provincial and regional priority has the potential to unlock immense economic value to Ontario and to improve the lives of everyone who uses the Toronto waterfront.

When built, the most immediate phase of the Waterfront East LRT will provide light-rail transit service directly from Union Station to Queen's Quay, from approximately Yonge Street to Cherry Street, and then south, through the Port Lands to Polson Quay. This stretch of the waterfront has never been served by higher-order transit, a fact that has hindered its development and imposed difficulty upon residents and visitors. Building transit will maximize the residential and commercial growth potential, especially through the Port Lands.

According to the [2019 economic impact study](#) prepared by Hatch for our BIA, completing the Waterfront East LRT by 2025, rather than 2045, would result in a variety of benefits. Transit ridership among new residents and workers would increase by 15%, while automobile use would decrease by 44%, reducing gridlock and congestion. 25,000 new housing units would open, accommodating almost 67,000 new area residents, helping to ease Toronto's housing crisis. Taken together, these two outcomes fit perfectly into the top goals you identify in your discussion paper, namely to improve transit connectivity by building new transit routes in highly urban areas, and relieving congestion by developing transit-oriented communities at transit stations.



Phone.
(416) 596-9821



Email.
tkocur@waterfrontbia.com



Website.
www.waterfrontbia.com



Address.
20 Bay Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON, M6J 2N8

We know the province is concerned about the challenges of available housing in Toronto relative to demand, and that you recognize the need to address this problem, in part, by increasing the housing supply, especially through transit-oriented development. Given this need, **adding higher-order transit service to the waterfront is a master stroke; with one project, the province can make significant progress on its housing and congestion goals.**

The opportunity

Ready to be built this decade, all levels of government must commit to funding and building now.



Accelerating the Waterfront East LRT would also increase the provincial government's tax revenue over the period 2025-2045 by \$3.8 billion, and would open 1.3 million new square feet of retail space, supporting the creation of up to 3,500 jobs. It's easy to understand why, in June 2021, the **Ontario Real Estate Association included the Waterfront East LRT in its list of Ontario's Top Ten unbuilt infrastructure projects**; and why, as recently as August 20, Mayor Tory identified the Waterfront East LRT as one of the City of Toronto's top-two transit infrastructure projects, along with the Eglinton East LRT.

We support the construction of Ontario's transit priorities, including those championed in your report and especially the Ontario Line, which offers the greatest benefit to the Toronto waterfront. Unfortunately, the Ontario Line, while it will pass quite close to the waterfront, will not have stations here; Corktown Station will be as far north as King Street, and East Harbour Station is far to the east. For this reason, the Waterfront East LRT is important because the benefits the LRT brings will increase significantly if linked to the Ontario Line, at Corktown via bus in the near term and to East Harbour directly in the long term. The Waterfront East LRT will be firmly linked into the subway network at both ends.



You conclude your Discussion Paper by asking what Ontario should do in the near term to build a better transportation system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In our view, the answer is to accelerate design, funding and construction for the Waterfront East LRT. While it would be ideal for the government to commit to expedited construction of all transit projects, we recognize the expense of these commitments in a post-Covid environment. In contrast, expediting the Waterfront East LRT would be comparatively inexpensive. The City of Toronto, TTC and Waterfront Toronto are engaged in completing 30% design and engineering of the first phase right now, and **the project is near "shovel-ready," primed for construction if the funding environment changed and financial support became fully available.** Another benefit would be the facilitation of alternative financing and procurement of the Waterfront East LRT; given a fully planned and designed project, Infrastructure Ontario could explore arrangements for private capital to help deliver the line. We have noted with concern that Infrastructure Ontario did not include this project in its 2021 Market Update, neither among projects in pre-procurement, nor even in projects in planning. We would hope that by accelerating the completion of full planning and design, Infrastructure Ontario would be encouraged to help the LRT come to market faster.

SUMMARY

We do not have the luxury of time as the Toronto waterfront is already under development and building without commitments to transit reduces the ability to construct transit-first communities that are not tied to automobile use. Once infrastructure is built and residents plan their lives and routines around the requirement of an automobile, the chance to switch them to a transit-using lifestyle is lost, with effects on their cost of living, on street congestion, and on carbon footprints.

As part of your government's development of a Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan, we strongly urge a recognition of the value of the Waterfront East LRT for the regional transit system; to commit funds to provide for its planning and construction on an expedited basis; and to include this project as a major transit investment to be constructed in the near term, alongside the Ontario Line and other key Toronto and regional transit projects.

Thank you and please contact me at tkocur@waterfrontbia.com if we can provide further details and background on the importance of accelerating the Waterfront East LRT.

Sincerely,

Tim Kocur,
Executive Director,
Waterfront BIA

cc: Michael Lindsay, President and CEO, Infrastructure Ontario