

August 21, 2020

Antonia Testa
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay St, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

Submission Re: Proposed Regulation for a Streamlined Environmental Assessment Process for the Ministry of Transportation’s Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor Project

Dear Ms. Testa,

We at the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development (“CUR”) at Ryerson University appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed streamlining of the environmental assessment process for the Greater Toronto Area (“GTA”) West Transportation Corridor project.

CUR’s mission is to enhance the use of economic analysis and market understanding in urban policy formulation and evaluation throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe (“GGH”). Our research over the past five years has demonstrated that the current land use planning system in the region, broadly defined to include major infrastructure like 400-series highways and transit, is inhibiting economic efficiency and productivity improvement and contributing to its housing affordability challenges, especially in the GTA. It is simply taking too long to bring critical infrastructure improvements such as roads, transit, sewers, and water to completion, or to ensure serviced sites in built-up urban and greenfield areas are available to meet the demands of new residents and businesses.

Meanwhile, the Province’s Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing forecast that the region’s relentless growth will continue over the longer-term. Much of the growth in population and employment is predicted to take place in the municipal regions directly impacted by the GTA West Transportation Corridor – York, Peel and Halton.

Metrolinx’s *2041 Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area* predicted that even with its recommended investments in transit, the transit mode share would only increase by 0.5 percentage points between 2011 and 2041 in the GTA and Hamilton (“GTHA”) during peak morning hours. This means that the number of trips by car will increase by 4.4 million daily trips during the peak rush hour by 2041 compared to 2011 (see [CUR’s recent research](#) in this area). Improved 400-series highways like the GTA West Corridor are essential to accommodate this growth.

It is mindboggling to realize that 12 years have passed since the terms of reference for the GTA West Corridor environmental assessment were set, and that a decade has passed since the Transportation Development Strategy identified the need for improved road capacity in the western GTA beyond optimizing the existing transportation network, widening existing highways and approving Metrolinx’s proposed transit expansion projects.

We congratulate the Province of Ontario for renewing the planning process cancelled by the previous government, confirming the preferred route, and proposing initiatives to accelerate the approval process for the GTA West Transportation Corridor. Without the proposed streamlining of the environmental assessment it would be the year 2023 or beyond before the preliminary design study for the Corridor is completed. With streamlining, it is possible that this can be completed by 2021, a noticeable improvement.

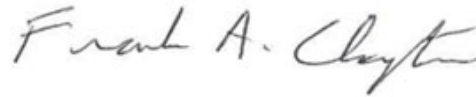
We support the Province's proposed regulation to streamline the approval process which would eliminate duplication while maintaining environmental protection.

Please contact us if you desire any follow-up to our submission.

Sincerely,



David Amborski
Director, CUR
Ryerson University



Frank Clayton
Senior Research Fellow, CUR
Ryerson University