

METROLINX REGIONAL OPEN HOUSES



Meeting Summary Report [12 of 13]

Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School, 959 Midland Avenue, Scarborough

November 28, 2016

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

OVERVIEW

Metrolinx hosted 13 Regional Open Houses between November 7th and November 29th, 2016 in multiple municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). The purpose of the meetings was to share information, review proposed mitigation strategies, and seek feedback on the following three Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP*) projects to build new track and electrification infrastructure on Metrolinx-owned rail corridors:

- GO Rail Network Electrification TPAP (with Hydro One as co-proponents);
- Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion TPAP; and
- Lakeshore East – Don River to Scarborough Expansion TPAP.

The Regional Open House meetings also included review of Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan, providing an opportunity to formally incorporate new insights into the plan, while ensuring momentum is maintained on the projects underway.

Approximately 40 people attended the 12th of 13 Regional Open Houses at Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Scarborough. The meeting began with a 30-minute open house, including a display of information boards for review. Manuel Pedrosa and Karen Pitre (Metrolinx) co-delivered a 30-minute overview presentation, and Nicole Swerhun (Swerhun Facilitation) facilitated about 45 minutes of questions from the audience. Following questions, participants had the opportunity to attend two workshops designed to present and seek feedback on noise and vibration issues and mitigation

strategies, and tree removal processes and compensation strategies. At the same time as the workshops were being held, Metrolinx staff and technical experts were available to answer questions in a separate area with the information boards and roll plans. Written feedback was sought from participants at the meeting using feedback forms, though no feedback forms were submitted. Please see the *Appendices* for the meeting agenda, the feedback form, and a list of reference materials provided.

Casey Craig and Nicole Swerhun, third party facilitators with Swerhun Facilitation, wrote this meeting summary. The purpose of this summary is to document detailed feedback from the meeting; it is not intended as a verbatim transcript. This summary will be shared with participants who provided an e-mail address upon sign in and is posted at gotransit.com/electrification. If you have any comments or questions about this summary, please contact electrification@metrolinx.com or 1-800-GET-ON-GO or (416) 869-3200.

**The Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) is the Environmental Assessment (EA) process for transit projects.*

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The following points provide a quick summary of the main feedback shared by participants during the meeting and in written feedback forms. Note that numbering is for ease of reference only and is not intended to reflect priorities.

1. TRANSIT EQUITY

- There is a great disparity in how the residents of Scarborough experience transit compared to the rest of the GTA. Residents might take transit if it better served our community.

2. GRADE SEPARATIONS

- Improved transit is badly needed, though there are major safety concerns around the at-grade crossings with about 8 schools in the community. Prioritize pedestrian crossings and grade separations in this community.

3. NOISE MITIGATION

- Go beyond the minimum requirements for noise mitigation by proving solutions in areas where there is less than a 5 dB increase as a result of increased train service because the existing noise is already quite high. For example, Treverton Park west of the tracks will not receive noise walls because the average noise is not increasing by 5 dB or more, but going from 17 trains a day to 180 will result in considerable additional noise.

4. FREIGHT BYPASS

- The community is against the Missing Link proposal that will bring freight trains to the Stouffville line. Put the trains north of the GTA.

5. AFFORDABILITY

- The service has to be affordable for the people who need it. Examine options beyond integrating fare. Integrated fare does not always mean a cheaper, more affordable tickets.

6. TREES

- Plant trees as early as possible so they have more time to grow.

QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION AND COMMENTS

After the overview presentation, participants asked questions of clarification. Note that the questions and comments have been organized in general topic areas, so that multiple questions raised (and responses provided) on similar or related points can be read together. As a result, the questions and comments don't necessarily follow in chronological order.

Metrolinx team members providing responses included: Karen Pitre, Electrification, and Manuel Pedrosa, Community Relations. Responses are noted in *italics*, where provided.

Transit Equity

1. **There is a great disparity in how the residents of Scarborough experience transit compared to the rest of the GTA. Residents might take transit if it better served our community.**

[Metrolinx added the following comment after the meeting:

We do have a multi-modal, 25 year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that guides Metrolinx, the Province, municipalities and others. It is currently being reviewed and updated. As part of the legislated review of the Regional Transportation Plan, a number of technical studies have been undertaken. The Transit Needs and Opportunities background paper addresses equity in the region. Equity is also noted as an important goal in the RTP Discussion Paper that Metrolinx released in August 2016. This paper presents the result of much of the technical work completed to inform the legislated review. A draft, updated RTP will be published in mid-2017 and will be available for public comment.]

Electrification

2. **Will the Richmond Hill line be electrified? I heard that it's going to cost \$5.2 billion to electrify and flood proof and buy the line from CN.** *Metrolinx is not yet planning to electrify the Richmond Hill line, and the fundamental reason is that it occasionally floods, and we would need to raise the tracks to address this – which is a significant amount of work. We can check and verify the cost estimate to verify it.*
3. **Are there any templates or examples that Metrolinx is following for electrification?** *Metrolinx is looking at examples from Montreal, Europe, and the United States.*
4. **Will the Overhead Contact System for the Stouffville corridor be a single portal or cantilever structure?** *The majority of the corridor is two tracks wide, which is typically served by the cantilever structure, though depending on the location, a portal structure may be required to span more than 2 tracks. This will be finalized during the detailed design stage.*
5. **At previous Metrolinx meetings we were told that Metrolinx would be putting in the foundations for the electrification infrastructure at the same time as the noise walls would be constructed.** *That is correct. Plans are now underway to install the Stouffville noise walls, followed by the electrification infrastructure.*

Grade separations and safety

6. **The traffic is quite bad at Kennedy Road near the Pacific Mall and pedestrians are walking on the tracks to get to the mall. Are there plans for an underpass on Kennedy?** *At-grade crossings are shared intersections between the municipality and Metrolinx. Currently Metrolinx is assessing short, medium, and long term grade separation priorities for these crossing, the results of which will be shared with the public upon completion.*

7. **When are you planning to address the crossing north of Agincourt Station? I'm with the Agincourt Village Association, and we know we need this transit – the problem is that there are 8 schools in the community and the kids have to cross the tracks to get to school. We have been told that service increases are coming in January 2017, so we need action now so things are in place for January 2017. The at-grade crossings are safe today, and Metrolinx will work to ensure that they are safe in the future also. Part of our plan is to provide education on how to be safe at road/rail crossings. Metrolinx provides a program for children and the general public called Operation Lifesaver to educate that train time is any time as we transition to more frequent night and weekend service.**
8. **Metrolinx appears to have recommended closing some of Scarborough's roads, like Huntingwood, to address the safety issues with at-grade crossings, which would negatively impact TTC service and traffic at Finch, Sheppard and Steeles. Can you confirm whether this will be happening? There are no plans as of yet to close any of the roads on the Stouffville corridor. Options were identified to address safety for at-grade crossings, including an overpass, an underpass, closing the street, or leaving the crossing as-is. All crossings are currently being studied.**

Cost

9. **Is there a cost estimate for electrification of the Stouffville corridor, and when will the work begin and finish? We've been assured that the double tracking would be done in 3 years, maybe 4 – but does that include the additional four Smart Track stations? And do you know the costing on the six Smart Track Stations? We expect the infrastructure to be in place and operational by 2025. Construction timing depends on the phasing of the work by corridor, and the order has not yet been determined. A contractor still has to be secured for the work as well. Cost information is available in the business case, which is available at:**
www.metrolinx.com/en/regionalplanning/projectevaluation/benefitscases/GO_RER_Initial_Business_Case_Summary_EN.pdf

Affordability

10. **What will you do to improve affordable access to the service? There is a lot of work being carried out on fare integration to avoid having passengers pay separate fares on the same trip. GO Transit was built as a commuter system and it is now providing more local service; equity is part of the ongoing review.**

Service planning and freight bypass

11. **Will service be going to 180 trains by 2025? Increased service up to 180 trains a day will be phased in over time. To get to 180 trains per day, the infrastructure must first be built for the increased service and a service plan must be finalized. The service plan will be shared with the public once finalized.**
12. **What will increased service look like before 2025? The phasing of increased service will begin with one extra morning and evening train in 2017. There are no full service plan details available yet.**
13. **Will you run diesel trains for the increased service on the line until the electrification infrastructure is complete? Yes. The network is expected to be electrified by 2025, so until then diesel trains will run on the lines.**
14. **Can you run 180 trains on a line that is shared with freight? We've heard there will be a freight bypass, and we will fight it because there are day cares next to the tracks. Many of us are organizing – ratepayers and residents – to have any bypass located north of the GTA. There are a lot of GO owned tracks where freight doesn't run. There is a desire to have freight and passenger**

train traffic separated. We're incrementally trying to remove freight, and the bypass is a preliminary idea, and we will provide more information as it is available.

Technology options

- 15. Will the technology we have today be the best option in 15 years? How are you future proofing the service? It's important to anticipate what we'll need in the future and do it now, rather than pay twice the construction costs.** *Metrolinx's 2010 Electrification Study concluded that electrification is the tried and tested option. Metrolinx is installing track infrastructure for service levels that are very ambitious and beyond projected needs to future proof the service.*

Construction and station progress

- 16. When does construction start south of Agincourt Station, particularly at the single track Sheppard Bridge?** *Double tracking construction will begin in February or March of 2017. The bridge will not be widened; there is room on the existing bridge to lay an additional track.*
- 17. Are the new Smart Track stations included in the Stouffville line double tracking, catenary and construction work?** *Two of the Smart Track stations will require their own Environmental Assessments, which have not been scheduled yet.*
- 18. Will the track levels be changing?** *During construction one side of the track is built at a time; when all the work is completed both tracks will be on the same level in the middle of the corridor.*
- 19. Will there be night time construction work for the electrification project?** *The construction of the electrification infrastructure is not as intrusive as track expansion, and it will move along parts of the corridor fairly quickly.*
- 20. Has an engineer been assigned for the Agincourt Station work?** *No, tender has not been completed yet.*

Noise and vibration

- 21. How quickly will Metrolinx be installing noise walls?** *For the Stouffville line, the east side of the track is receiving noise walls first, the west side will receive noise walls in 2017. Work has temporarily stopped in some places to address some issues with integrated noise and retaining walls.*
- 22. Treverton Park has no noise walls, but the noise study says that noise will increase by 5 dB or more. Has there been any recommendations on noise and vibration mitigation, such as noise walls or ballast mats? We need all the help we can get.** *Measurements of existing noise and vibration levels have been completed and compared to future service levels to determine where increases of 5 dB or more in noise are to be expected. There was a previous Environmental Assessment done on the Stouffville line that made noise mitigation recommendations. Since then, the electrification related Environmental Assessment has modelled the noise increases based on 180 trains a day, identifying additional areas where noise is an issue. Ballast mats could be used where there is a significant change in vibration as a result of the project. This mostly occurs when new tracks or switch locations are installed closer to noise receptors (homes, etc.). At this point in construction, ballast mats are possible, but they are typically not laid under existing tracks. If tracks are relocated closer to houses and the change in vibration is high enough, ballast mats would be recommended.*

Property impacts

- 23. When will more detail on impacts to property be available?** *More detail will be available at the detailed design stage of the project. Agincourt has had public drop in sessions for the public to have property and project questions answered.*

Long term planning

24. **Metrolinx appears to be planning one week at a time for a long range project, and it seems like there is little new information you are able to share with us tonight. A lot of work is happening simultaneously, so we are trying to phase it and complete it as fast as possible.**

[Metrolinx added the following comment after the meeting:

We do have a multi-modal, 25 year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that guides Metrolinx, the Province, municipalities and others, which is currently being reviewed and updated. A draft, updated RTP will be published in mid-2017 and will be available for public comment.]

DETAILED MEETING SUMMARY

Feedback was provided during the questions of clarification period and two concurrent workshops. The summary below integrates feedback from each of these sources and is organized into three parts: noise and vibration; tree removal impacts and compensation strategies; and general Metrolinx feedback and advice.

Noise and Vibration

Mike Lepage from RWDI, Metrolinx's consultant for noise and vibration matters, provided a brief introduction to noise and vibration issues and mitigation strategies. The following is a summary of the noise and vibration related questions and feedback. Metrolinx team members who provided responses included: James Hartley, Electrification and Morayo Ninalowo, Electrification. Responses, where provided, are in *italics*.

Noise and Vibration-Related Questions

Mike opened the workshop by reviewing the following points regarding RWDI's noise modelling work:

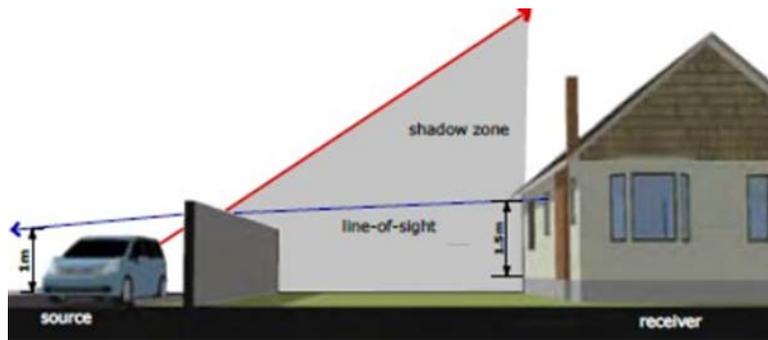
- The team estimated predicted noise impacts from the future rail traffic levels as well as the average increase in noise to nearby sensitive noise receptors;
- They looked at both daytime and nighttime levels;
- The Ontario Government has a Provincial Protocol (*MOEE / GO Transit Draft Protocol for Noise and Vibration Assessment*) that uses two criteria to determine when action is required related to noise: (1) if the total noise is 60 dB or more during the day, and 55 dB or more at night, and (2) there is a change in noise of 5 dB or greater.
- About 100 km of GO track met the criteria for the investigation of noise mitigation. Of that 100 km, there are about 65 km where noise walls are technically feasible and about 35 km where they are not (typically because of the topography).

Participants asked questions and provided comments as well as advice. Answers, where provided, are included in *italics*.

1. **The noise walls will be hugely intrusive. I would take the noise over a wall. Do I have a choice?** *The challenge is that any break in the wall dramatically reduces the effectiveness of the wall for your neighbours. A more detailed discussion can take place during the detailed design stage.*
2. **I work for a homebuilder, and we would never be able to build a house next to the tracks today without mitigating the impacts of the noise – there are guidelines that need to be followed. Yet**

when Metrolinx increases service around existing developments, they don't have to follow the same rules. Metrolinx has to follow the Provincial Guideline (MOEE / GO Transit Draft Protocol for Noise and Vibration Assessment).

3. **Is there any acoustic shadow design available?** Yes, we can include it when we send the notes from tonight. [See graphic on the right added by RWDI / Metrolinx after the meeting]



4. **How much noise is 5 dB?** Today the peak noise from a passing train is likely around 90 dB right at the fence line, and then the noise drops with distance. The provincial guidelines say that when the average noise over the course of a day increases by 5 dB or more, a barrier should be investigated.
5. **Is the noise from freight trains included in the modelling?** Yes.
6. **Metrolinx removed all the trees from the corridor and the noise went up.** Trees have not been proven as effective at mitigating impacts from noise.
7. **Where is vibration addressed?** When there is a significant enough change in vibration, Metrolinx needs to address it. At some places the vibration is well above the desired level, but the impact is not from this project.
8. **If the noise increases by 10 dB does Metrolinx only need to bring the level down by 5 dB?** The goal is that a noise barrier would bring the noise levels down by at least 5 dB.
9. **Are the electrification lines always electrified?** Yes, at all times, not only when trains are coming by.
10. **Will the electrical lines hum?** No. There are engineering solutions in place to prevent this.
11. **Will noise walls reduce the noise enough to bring the average down to the 55 dB daytime threshold?** In some areas yes, in others it will not be possible. There may be cases where the existing noise levels are already above 55dB, and it may not be possible for a noise wall to reduce noise levels from increased service below the existing noise levels.

Noise-Related Advice

Noise mitigation was a high priority. Participants noted that the current levels of noise are already high, and that they are already negatively impacted. Increased service will introduce a more steady noise source and participants would like to see Metrolinx address this noise. Specific advice and suggestions for Metrolinx included:

- **Metrolinx should go above and beyond the noise guidelines and use whatever means possible to bring the noise down to 55 dB.** The noise is so loud that I can't hear the TV in my bedroom.
- **Bring noise back down to the 55 dB limit where it is below this threshold today.** Use as many mitigation tools as required to bring noise levels down to 55 dB to match recommendations, where the existing noise is below 55 dB today.
- **Metrolinx should study the impacts that noise walls have in channeling wind in backyards.** RWDI as a firm also has wind experts, and they said any impacts of a 5 meter high noise wall on wind would be limited.

Tree Removal Impacts and Compensation Strategies

Ralph Toninger from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) was available to answer questions and discuss tree removal impacts along the corridor. The following is a summary of the tree removal related questions and feedback.

Tree-Related Advice

Participants said they are not asking to stop the increase of trains, but that they would like Metrolinx to help their community with tree removal compensation as projects progress. Priorities included early tree replacement and communication about the process and opportunities around tree removal. Replacing trees early helps avoid the long delay between the project completion and growth of the trees – some trees still have not been planted from prior projects – and communication can help avoid devastating losses where trees have been removed in error or without appropriate permits.

- **Plant trees as early as possible so they have more time to grow.** Coordinate the replacement of trees sooner after they have been removed, or even before they are cut. The trees will help beautify and improve the aesthetics of a community, especially around noise walls.
- **Strengthen communication.** Be forthcoming with information to improve communication with communities.
- **Provide links to organizations that can help homeowners properly plant trees on their own.** Link to organizations like LEAF, the City of Toronto, etc. Participants are interested in where to get trees, how to plant them properly, and information on soil and conditions for growth.
- **Offer trees as compensation for noise walls** where individual property owners are affected.
- **Set up a system where property owners can request trees for their properties when others have opted not to replace their cut trees on their property.**
- **Provide the opportunity to private property owners who did not have any trees removed to receive a tree when they are removed from Metrolinx right of way or the public right of way.**

General Metrolinx Feedback and Advice

Participants provided the following general comments for Metrolinx's consideration:

- **Accelerate the grade separation work.**
- **Do not increase train service until grade separations are complete.**
- **Do not close roads along the Stouffville corridor** because it will negatively impact traffic and TTC service.

NEXT STEPS

Nicole Swerhun advised that all 13 meeting summaries will be available online early in the new year, along with an integrated summary identifying common themes across all meetings.

Participants were encouraged to tell their friends and neighbours about the opportunity to provide feedback. The same questions posed at the Regional Open House meetings will be available for feedback online until December 14, 2016. Participants were encouraged to provide their email address to ensure they receive up to date project information.

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda



The purpose of these Open Houses is to learn about key transit projects relevant to your community, provide feedback and talk to Metrolinx staff. Topics include:

- Discuss Environmental Assessment (EA)/Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) to build new track and electrification infrastructure in the following areas:
 - GO Rail Network Electrification TPAP (Hydro One as co-proponents)
 - Barrie Rail Corridor Expansion TPAP
 - Lakeshore East – Don River to Scarborough Expansion TPAP
- Review of proposed mitigation strategies
- Review of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) providing the opportunity to formally incorporate new insights into the plan, while ensuring we maintain momentum on the projects underway

AGENDA

6:30 pm	Open House
7:00	Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review <i>Swerhun Facilitation</i>
7:05	Overview Presentation <i>Metrolinx</i>
7:35	Facilitated Questions of Clarification
7:45	Working Sessions (on Noise & Trees), Display Boards & Roll Plans 7:45 – 8:15 Rotation 1 8:15 – 8:45 Rotation 2
8:45	Wrap-Up Plenary Discussion & Next Steps
9:00	Adjourn

Trees

What type of compensation would you like to see considered when trees are removed:

On your property?

In your community?

From the watershed?

Any other thoughts or advice?

Do you have any other feedback to share at this point?

Please write here if your comments are related to a specific GO corridor

CORRIDOR NAME: _____

Please write here if your comments relate to the GO system as a whole

Please hand your written comments in at the Sign-In Table before you leave and/or share your thoughts online at www.metrolinxengage.com

All feedback received by Wednesday, December 14, 2016 will be incorporated into a summary of input and advice received during the regional open houses in November. Each of the 13 regional open houses will have a summary, and an overall integrated summary will also be produced. The summaries will be posted online and shared with all participants providing an email address.

Appendix C: List of Reference Materials

Participants received the following information sheets as inserts to the agenda package upon sign-in:

- EA Info Sheet – Noise
- EA Info Sheet – Vibration
- EA Info Sheet – Trees
- EA Info Sheet – Visual Impacts
- Booklet – The Regional Transportation Plan for Today and Tomorrow

EA Info sheets were available on the Metrolinx Engage website throughout the Metrolinx Regional Open House meetings.