

# METROLINX REGIONAL OPEN HOUSES



## Meeting Summary Report [6 of 13]

Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute, 3663 Danforth Avenue, Scarborough

November 17, 2016

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

## OVERVIEW

Metrolinx hosted thirteen (13) Regional Open Houses between November 7<sup>th</sup> and November 29<sup>th</sup>, 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 (3) 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 Rail Corridor Expansion – Don River to Scarborough GO Station TPAP.

The focus of this meeting was to discuss the Electrification and Lakeshore East TPAPs specifically.

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 16 people attended the sixth of 13 Regional Open Houses at Birchmount Park Collegiate Institute in Scarborough. The meeting began with a 30-minute open house, including a display of information boards for review. Karen Pitre and Katie Bright (Metrolinx) co-delivered a 30-minute overview presentation, and Avril Fischen (AECOM) facilitated approximately 30 minutes of questions

from the audience. Two (2) 30-minute workshop rotations followed, 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 room with the information boards and roll plans. Written feedback received from participants at the meeting (using feedback forms) is also integrated into this summary. One (1) feedback form was received. Please see the *Appendices* for the meeting agenda, the feedback form, and a list of reference materials provided.

Tiffany Lobb (AECOM) compiled this Meeting Summary Report. The purpose of this Summary Report 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](http://gotransit.com/electrification). If you have any comments or questions about this summary, please contact [electrification@metrolinx.com](mailto:electrification@metrolinx.com) or 1-800-GET-ON-GO or (416) 869-3200.

*\*The 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 written feedback forms. Note that numbering is for ease of reference only and is not intended to reflect priorities.

### 1. ALLOW COMMUNITY INPUT

- Provide more details regarding project processes as early as possible and allow local residents / the community to review and provide comments on project elements such as noise walls and their design, materials used, etc.

### 2. CONSIDER VISUAL IMPACTS

- Consider the visual impacts of noise walls, fences and other project infrastructure.
- Consider the use of trees as visual mitigation.

### 3. TREES

- Prioritize maintenance of trees. Maintaining trees is just as important as planting new trees; they need to be able to survive. Controlling invasive species is also important.
- Make an informed selection of tree species to be planted.
- Species of trees being planted is as important as the number of trees being planted.
- Ensure trees have the optimal environment for survival.

### 4. EDUCATION

- Provide further education / information to the public, especially regarding modeling as it is difficult to understand.

## QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION

After the overview presentation, participants asked questions of clarification. Metrolinx team members providing responses included: Karen Pitre, Executive Director Electrification; Andre Marois, Director Lakeshore East Corridor; Katie Bright, Environmental Project Manager; Melissa Webb, Environmental Project Manager; Chris Harker, Realty Services Manager; Sil Spera, Realty Consultant; Phil Herbeson, Manager Transportation; Eric Petersen, Senior Advisor Transportation; Tom Aylward-Nally, Stakeholder Relations and Research Coordinator; and, Carmen Rapati, Community Relations and Issues Specialist.

In addition, the following consultant staff from RWDI and AECOM were present to provide technical support: Kyle Hellewell, Senior Acoustics Engineer; Ayhem Sadie, Consultant Project Manager Lakeshore East Corridor; Matt Scoular, Consultant Environmental Lead Lakeshore East Corridor; Marian Tibor-McMahon, Consultant Environmental Planner; Avril Fisker, Consultant Communications and Community Engagement Lead; and, Tiffany Lobb, Consultant Communication and Consultation Specialist.

Responses from Metrolinx, City staff, and/or the project teams are noted in *italics*, where provided.

1. I have been seeing debates about connections with local transit at regional express rail (RER) Stations / GO Stations. Has this come up? *As RER is advancing, Metrolinx is consulting with local transit partners to enhance local transit connections at stations through designs and processes. Where suitable, we are working to coordinate our services with specialized transit, conventional bus transit as well as rapid transit.*
2. If you look at the number of people in Scarborough using public transit, 60% go downtown, and therefore there is a strong need for GO services. I am interested in how Stouffville service will go with Smart Track running parallel to GO service. Have discussions taken place regarding Smart Track? *We are looking into rapid transit frequency. In the November 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, it was noted that Smart Track proposes 6 additional stations as part of the RER 10-year program. Smart Track adds stations at Finch East and Lawrence East (Stouffville Corridor), Liberty Village and St. Clair West (Kitchener Corridor), East Harbour and Gerrard (Lakeshore East/Stouffville Corridor). It will use the same rolling stock as electrification.*

## DETAILED MEETING SUMMARY

Feedback was provided in writing through comment forms and group discussions during two (2) 30-minute workshop rotations. The summary below integrates feedback from each of these sources and is organized into three (3) parts: noise and vibration; tree removal and compensation strategies; and other feedback received by participants.

### Noise and Vibration

Kyle Hellewell from RWDI, Metrolinx's consultant for noise and vibration matters, provided a brief introduction to noise and vibration issues and mitigation strategies. Karen Pitre (Metrolinx, Electrification) answered questions along with Kyle during the workshop.

### Noise and Vibration Questions

Kyle 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 on nearby sensitive noise receptors for all Metrolinx-owned corridors to be electrified;
- 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, Draft #9, January 1995*) that uses two criteria to determine when action is required related to noise: 1) if the total noise is 60 decibels (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. What does the noise profile look like over time for electrification? *Although the electrification technology could change by the time we implement it, the noise levels of electrification are very similar to diesel when operating. The diesel start-up / acceleration is much louder than electrification.*
2. What is the feasibility of the berms? *The difference between barriers and berms is not large when discussing sound. The big difference is in the footprint. This will not be determined until detailed design but it is likely that barriers will be used versus berms.*
3. What is the difference between the reflection off of barriers versus the reflection off of berms? *Barriers can create smooth reflection causing more noise but this is why we use absorbent materials. Berms can absorb more noise than barriers.*
4. Are there any other options for noise mitigation other than barriers and berms? *Options will be discussed during detailed design. We will take a look at source controls to reduce noise such as sound dampening equipment on the tracks and on the trains.*
5. What is the dB level increase for noise? *For this project, we typically see 5-10 dB noise level increases.*
6. What is the standard for current acceptable noise levels? *We conduct modeling for current noise levels versus modeling for predicted future noise levels. The current noise levels are seen as the standard. A 5 dB increase would be based off the current noise level (current being noise levels measured in 2015).*
7. What about homes that were built recently? *A noise and vibration assessment for current and future rail service must be completed for any homes built within 300 m of the tracks.*
8. Nearby my house there is a berm but the roll plan shows the area as technically feasible. Does this mean there will be an additional barrier? *Yes, it could mean this. If the area is marked as technically feasible it means it is listed as being considered for noise mitigation, to be determined during detailed design.*
9. How does vegetation play into noise mitigation? For example, placing ivy on a noise wall. *Vegetation does not contribute much to noise mitigation. You would need a considerably large and dense amount of vegetation to see any reduction in noise.*
10. What are the vibration mitigation measures? *The most common way to mitigate vibration is to install ballast mats under the tracks to absorb vibration.*

11. Is the detailed design process different than the EA? *Yes. The EA determines preliminary mitigation measures that are then carried forward to be further assessed during detailed design. Detailed design provides an in-depth analysis leading up to completion of the project.*
12. Will the EA and detailed design processes be open to the public? *Absolutely. Metrolinx will provide many opportunities for public engagement during both the EA and detailed design processes.*
13. Is there a Metrolinx contact person for our local community? *Carmen Rapati is the Community Relations contact for this project. You can also visit [www.metrolinx.com/donriverscarborough](http://www.metrolinx.com/donriverscarborough) and sign up to join the email list as Metrolinx provides regular project updates.*

## Noise and Vibration-Related Advice

Noise mitigation is a high priority; participants would like Metrolinx to consider raising the height of noise walls to mitigate impacts and implement more strategies to mitigate noise for nearby residents. Metrolinx should also provide further education regarding modeling processes as it is difficult for members of the public to understand. Specific advice and suggestions for Metrolinx included:

- Raise the height of noise walls. This will further mitigate impacts and provide a more peaceful atmosphere for homeowners close to the rail right-of-way (ROW).
- Match the noise mitigation level with the noise level increase anticipated. Metrolinx should think about the increase in rail traffic and frequency as well as the increase in regular traffic and how that noise affects local residents.
- Consider visual impacts. For example, visual impacts of noise walls and the potential for noise walls to be a canvas for graffiti. Metrolinx should think of ways to minimize visual impacts.
- Provide further education. Modelling is difficult for the general public to understand. Metrolinx should provide further education /details so that the information is clear.

## Tree Removal and Compensation Strategies

Brad Stevens (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)), along with Katie Bright (Metrolinx), provided a brief overview of the impact of electrification and new track infrastructure on trees along some portions of Metrolinx rail corridors, and sought feedback on mitigation strategies and a new compensation protocol for tree removal.

Brad Stevens opened the workshop by providing information regarding the partnership between TRCA and Metrolinx for the tree compensation protocol. He explained the goal to standardize the protocol and include what community members would like to see in their communities.

Katie Bright explained that Metrolinx is standardizing how to compensate trees throughout the network, including the following categories:

- Metrolinx ROW;
- Private Property;
- Municipal trees; and
- Natural heritage trees.

Metrolinx is currently in the preliminary phases and have held workshops with municipalities within the Metrolinx network. So far, Metrolinx has received positive feedback from municipalities.

## Tree Removal and Compensation Questions

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

1. In terms of trees within the ROW, what is the process of tree removal and how are trees managed long-term? *The appropriate municipal permits and approvals will be obtained prior to commencing tree removal activities. An Arborist Report and Tree Inventory may be completed to support the permit application. Tree removal will occur during particular times of year to avoid breeding seasons. Any damaged trees will be pruned through the implementation of proper arboricultural techniques under the supervision of an Arborist or Forester. Any new trees and/or restoration areas are typically monitored for a period of time following the planting to ensure success rate.*
2. What if landowners that require tree removal on their property do not want to lose their trees? *Metrolinx will take their time and work through individual situations with landowners by hosting multiple discussions. We must consider the safety aspects and if the tree has the potential to survive the construction process.*
3. If Metrolinx compensates trees at a 1:3 ratio but then in six (6) months the trees that were planted die, what happens? *The City of Toronto has a compensation protocol with standards that Metrolinx endeavors to meet, including monitoring of tree survival.*
4. How does Metrolinx deal with sensitivity toward property owners living close to the rail corridor? Is Metrolinx honest with property owners? *We want to understand all impacts in order to provide proper mitigation and strive for open and honest discussion through all phases of development.*
5. Are chemicals used when removing vegetation? *No, chemicals are not used.*
6. What are you looking at in terms of species and biodiversity for tree replacements? *If the tree replacement is on City of Toronto land, City staff have a system in place through a permitting process to determine the species of trees, growing instructions, stock types, etc. to ensure biodiversity is achieved. There may be an opportunity to push biodiversity further.*
7. Does the City have a program in place for tree replacement for homeowners? If so, is this program integrated into the City lands program? *The City of Toronto requires that a landscape/replanting plan be submitted with each application for the removal/injuring of trees on private property. We are not familiar with how this is integrated into the City lands program.*
8. The City has a program where they can replace trees from the ROW to private / homeowner land. Is there a program in place like this for this project? *There is no current plan to replace trees from the ROW onto private lands but there is a program in place to improve their survival rate. The current life expectancy of trees planted in the GTA is eight (8) years because of constraints such as, not enough soil, roots get compacted, etc. We are aiming to replace one (1) tree with three (3) versus one (1) with better growing conditions to expand the lifespan of the trees.*
9. How are trees surviving in well-established areas? *Construction techniques have changed over the years. In older developed areas, the construction conditions allowed for trees to survive longer. In newly developed areas the grading conditions affect tree survival more negatively.*
10. Are there other alternatives in terms of environmental improvements other than tree removal and compensation? *There have been discussions regarding the installation of green roofs or bioswales. There might be an opportunity to install green roofs on stations and in nearby parks but they may not have environmental function. Metrolinx will look into this with TRCA.*

11. The total tree removal for this project is large so I am concerned about running out of planting room. Will there be a regional relocation of trees and plants? *That is good feedback; we will look into this as a possibility.*

### Tree-Related Advice

Priorities raised included openness and honesty with landowners and local residents, focusing on the choice of species of trees being planted (native and/or diverse), and putting more effort into the trees being planted to ensure maximum lifespan. Specific advice and suggestions for Metrolinx included:

- Be upfront and honest to local residents about potential impacts. Allow us to prepare for what could potentially happen throughout construction and operation.
- Make an informed selection of tree species. The species of the tree planted is as important as the amount of trees being planted. We want to ensure the trees planted will be given the maximum lifespan opportunity.

### Other Feedback Received

Following the noise and vibration and trees working sessions, participants provided the following general comments and questions for Metrolinx's consideration.

- Length of construction for the widening at Woodbine Avenue should be provided. *The widening at Woodbine Avenue will probably take two (2) construction seasons, beginning in mid-2018. There will be traffic impacts and lane restrictions.*
- When do plans become concrete for Main Street Station and Gerrard Street Station? *We are in the preliminary stages for Danforth Station. The building will need to be reconstructed. Detailed design will begin in 2017, where more details will be provided.*
- Ensure murals are not impacted by construction. Metrolinx should take street art into consideration.

## NEXT STEPS

Avril Fischen 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 were 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

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## AGENDA

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



## Appendix B: Feedback Form

# FEEDBACK FORM

## Noise

1. We know there are important benefits as well as key challenges associated with construction of noise walls. **What are some of the challenges specific to your community? What would you like to see Metrolinx consider in order to address them?**

2. This EA will identify areas where noise mitigation should be investigated further, but will not identify the preferred mitigation measure. **What advice do you have for Metrolinx on how to continue to involve you and your community in future discussions regarding noise mitigation?**

3. Any other thoughts or advice?

# 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](http://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.

## Appendix D: Feedback Forms Received

# FEEDBACK FORM

## Noise

1. We know there are important benefits as well as key challenges associated with construction of noise walls. **What are some of the challenges specific to your community? What would you like to see Metrolinx consider in order to address them?**

WE LIVE IN A SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD JUST SOUTH OF DANFORTH BETWEEN WARREN + OAKRIDGE PARK. IF A SOUND WALL OR THE LIKE IS ERECTED, WE WOULD LIKE METROLINX TO ALLOW THE COMMUNITY TO HAVE INPUT ON IT'S DESIGN. i.e. MATERIALS USED, OVERALL LOOK, ETC.

2. This EA will identify areas where noise mitigation should be investigated further, but will not identify the preferred mitigation measure. **What advice do you have for Metrolinx on how to continue to involve you and your community in future discussions regarding noise mitigation?**

3. Any other thoughts or advice?