

METROLINX REGIONAL OPEN HOUSES



Meeting Summary Report [7 of 13]

Cornell Community Centre, 3201 Bur Oak Avenue, Markham

November 17, 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 seventh of 13 Regional Open Houses at Cornell Community Centre in Markham. The meeting began with a 30-minute open house, including a display of information boards for review. James Hartley (Metrolinx) delivered a 30-minute overview presentation, and Nicole Swerhun (Swerhun Facilitation) facilitated about 45 minutes of questions from participants. Following questions, participants had the opportunity to ask specific questions about noise and trees to experts from RWDI and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). At the same time as the group

discussions on noise and trees, Metrolinx staff and technical experts were available to answer questions in a separate area with the information boards and roll plans. Written feedback received from participants at the meeting (using feedback forms) is also integrated into this summary (2 feedback forms were received). 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. **ADDRESS TRAIN HORN NOISE**
 - Revisit and update the Federal Train Horn rule to better reflect that rail is now in urban and intensifying areas, and that safety can be addressed through other means.
2. **MAJOR SAFETY CONCERNS WITH INCREASED SERVICE AND AT-GRADE CROSSINGS**
 - Safety at these intersections is a major concern, especially given the many schools in the area.
3. **EXPLORE INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES**
 - Continue to explore alternative technologies to electrification and re-examine the alternatives before capital is deployed on the project. Ensure the service is not antiquated too soon.
4. **CONSIDER THE REGIONAL IMPACTS OF PROVIDING MORE LOCAL SERVICE**
 - Additional stations along the line to increase capacity and integrate with local service add time to already lengthy regional commutes.
5. **TRANSIT NEEDS TO BE ACCESSIBLE AND CONVENIENT**
 - If my transit experience is not accessible and easy, I am going to use my car. Develop ways for transit users to get from home and to the stations and back more easily, and more quickly. Possible options could include more frequent GO Bus service at rush hour with additional stops.
6. **STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITY**
 - Continue to work with the community. Communicate clearly and often regarding construction, tree removal, and progress on studies and projects. Show that feedback has been considered.

DETAILED MEETING SUMMARY

After the overview presentation, participants asked questions of clarification. Part-way through the discussion, two additional experts were introduced: Mike Lepage from RWDI, Metrolinx's consultant for noise and vibration matters, provided a brief introduction to noise and vibration issues and mitigation strategies; and Ralph Toningner from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) summarized the impacts of tree removal on certain parts of the corridor, and introduced the idea of a new standardized compensation protocol.

Note that the questions 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 don't necessarily follow in chronological order.

All questions, responses, comments and advice are reflected in the summary below, which is organized into three parts: questions and answers, noise and tree-related feedback and advice, and other feedback received from participants. Metrolinx team members who provided responses included: James Hartley, Electrification; Karla Avis-Birch, Corridor Director – Stouffville Corridor; David Phalp, Regional Planning; and Antonio DiFebo, Network Capital Infrastructure. Responses are noted in *italics*, where provided.

Questions and Answers

Noise

1. **How is the 5 dB increase in noise measured?** *When train service is increased, it does not change the noise level of each train, it increases the number of times that noise happens. That's why the Provincial guideline measures how average noise changes over a 16 hour day and 8 hour night. The measurement of the increased noise is an average of the noise experienced over time, taking into account the number of times you experience the noise and the level of noise of each passing train.*
2. **If the increase in noise is only related to the increased number of trains, how many trains does it take to reach a 5 dB averaged increase?** *There are many areas where the noise increases more than 5dB. It takes approximately a 3-fold increase in the frequency of trains to result in a 5 dB increase in noise. There are several places where the noise is expected to increase by 5 dB or more, and those are the areas where we've suggested a noise barrier be constructed.*
3. **Could the rolling stock be designed to decrease the noise generated?** *Electrification is in itself a noise mitigation measure, since electric trains are quieter than diesel (when the train is accelerating).*
4. **Since the trees have been removed in our area, we experience much more noise.** *The future noise wall, once in place, is expected to provide a much more significant reduction in noise than the trees did, as the trees have gaps that allow some of the noise to penetrate.*
5. **How much would a 15 foot noise wall reduce noise in the Agincourt community?** *Noise walls are more effective the closer you are to the wall. Close to the wall, a 15-20 dB noise reduction is possible; further away, the wall is less effective. Noise walls are most effective at reducing wheel noise, and somewhat less effective for engine noise, as the engine noise is emitted closer to the top of the wall. If the wall does not break the line of sight between the train and the impact location, then the wall will not provide much benefit at that location.*

Safety and at-grade crossings

6. **What kind of safety measures are you taking for at-grade crossings, particularly with respect to accidents, direct access to the tracks, and increased volume of trains?** *The Overhead Contact*

System itself does not present a safety issues as the wires will be installed about 7.5 meters above the road. The OCS structures will be designed in such a way that people cannot climb the poles. We are also undergoing an exercise to evaluate at-grade crossing safety measures and solutions. Three Lakeshore East grade separation projects to address safety have been proposed thus far.

7. **How will Metrolinx quadruple the frequency of trains without impacting flow of streets and safety for pedestrians and the children of the 7 schools in the area? We've been asking for a safety plan for over a year.** *All Metrolinx road-rail crossings are safe, and Metrolinx works to go above and beyond to address further safety issues wherever possible. There will be a public workshop in the Agincourt community soon, watch your newspaper for the details and/or make sure you're on the mailing list for the Stouffville corridor. There are two potential grade separation projects being considered: one at Steeles and one at Finch. Metrolinx has also been working on a network analysis of all at-grade crossings to identify priorities that will guide discussions with regions and cities. But grade separation is not the only solution, education is also important – we will be augmenting our work in schools, doing community safety projects, etc.*
8. **What is the status of the at-grade crossing study?** *The grade separation prioritization exercise will provide the data and analysis that will be also be used to address 'bells and whistles'. The study on at-grade crossings should be ready to share in early 2017. The noise evaluation for electrification (as a result of increased service) will be available before March 2017. A Noise Action Plan will look at existing regulations and how to deal with them across the board.*
9. **Will all major crossings have grade separations?** *There are only 2 planned for the Stouffville corridor for the first phase, one at the Pacific Mall and one at Finch.*

Train bells and whistles

10. **Will Metrolinx be updating the 140 year old federal train whistles law (based on Morse code for 'Q', announcing arrival of Queen Victoria) to reflect that rail is now in urban and intensifying areas? The noise starts at 5/5:30am and there are five intersections in our area here the horns are blown. There are regulations that allow for the cessation of horns and train whistles.** *Metrolinx complies with the Federal Rail Administration's Train Horn Rule, which requires the sounding of a horn (2 long, 1 short, 1 long blast) when approaching level crossings. For special cases, special exemptions can be made, however a lengthy legal process is required. There is work underway to develop a Noise Action Plan. The study of Metrolinx's work on at-grade crossings will be released early in 2017, and that is an input into how Metrolinx address issues with bells and whistles.*
11. **How can we stop the train whistles and would it impact safety?** *Municipalities have the ability to apply to for exemptions to the Train Horn Rule. Barriers, lights, and gongs exist, and there are other mitigation and safety measures that could be used instead.*

Electrification technology

12. **What are the benefits of electrifying the rail corridor?** *Electric trains can reach top speeds faster than diesel trains, so more trains are able to be run on the tracks. Electric trains are quieter coming out of stations, though at cruising speeds the noise difference between electric and diesel trains is minimal as most of the noise comes from the wheels, which would be the same. While the Overhead Contact System would need regular maintenance, electric trains have less moving parts and have fewer maintenance requirements overall.*
13. **Were there any hybrid options or other alternatives to electrification for the increased service? I'm worried that we'll have an antiquated service by 2025.** *In our 2010 study we examined options for alternate power systems for trains and concluded that other newly developing technologies are not at a stage where they would be ready for use on an active rail corridor. Hybrid diesel and electric*

was explored, along with other options, but the study determined that electrification was the best option.

14. **They're building electrification in many countries in Europe – Germany, Belgium, France – and children learn from a very young age how to be safe around the trains. Education is everything. I think a number of the questions raised here are because there isn't as much experience with trains here. In Europe we have trains travelling 300 km/hr and schools nearby and everything is safe. I suggest Metrolinx connect with these cities to learn from them. Has Metrolinx connected with other cities that have 100 years of experience with electrified service to examine possibilities and learn from their challenges and mistakes?** *Yes. The senior management team has been the UK, and Metrolinx has hired international experts to help design the system. Market sounding is also being done to determine how best to bundle and package the electrified service to the public.*
15. **Are target speeds for electric and diesel trains different?** *Electric trains are Class 5, which can go up to 90 mph, though trains would not be able to consistently run at that speed because of train station locations and bends in the track. Similar to roads, train speed can be restricted due to factors such as track conditions and signaling.*
16. **Will GO Transit share electrical service with VIA Rail?** *VIA has reached out to Metrolinx but there is no funding for this; there are only early discussions at this point.*

Track expansion

17. **Can the Stouffville Corridor accommodate a second track?** *Yes, this is currently being constructed to Unionville.*
18. **Is electrification a prerequisite for double tracking?** *No. The double tracking work is required to accommodate all day, two way service.*

Service planning

19. **We and our neighbours have spoken very clearly in favour of this increased service for some time – it's long overdue. Families have been waiting for years for it to come, and we don't want to wait until 2025 – do it faster!**
20. **Will the 2-way service be extended beyond Unionville Station?** *No.*
21. **Will Metrolinx introduce an express service? More stations will result in longer commute times. It is possible. The service plan and trip schedules have not been finalized.**

Improving the transit experience

22. **How much will electrification of the network shorten my trip?** *A bigger difference in travel time will be noticeable at the end of the line. We hope to see roughly an 8% improvement in service, but it depends on the rolling stock Metrolinx selects. If Metrolinx selects EMU, there are better acceleration capabilities. Trains on the Stouffville corridor currently have the capacity to run at 50 mph, but the signaling system needs to be improved to accommodate faster train service. Work at the south end of the corridor affects the train movement further north.*
23. **Are there any lessons learned from the UP Express ridership and options for individual riders getting from the station to their destination?** *Metrolinx is looking at the first and last mile challenge to get people from stations to their homes. A change in mindset is required, and to do that, we need to make it easy for people to get to and from the stations. Our work in Unionville and Milliken is focusing on this, where we're working with the City of Markham and developers to bring transit-oriented development and better connections.*

Station work

24. What is happening with the Markham mobility hub? *There is a lot of work happening simultaneously. There will be new platforms for the 2nd track in Unionville, as well as a 3rd turning track. Metrolinx is looking to provide about 300 additional parking spaces. In partnership with the City of Markham we are hoping to influence the modal split and the directions that people are travelling. We have the 407 Bus Rapid Transit, more parking, more people living in the area, and cycling top of mind. There will be meetings in Unionville and Milliken in early January 2017 for an infrastructure improvement plan for the area.*

Local and regional service and transit infrastructure

25. Will there be any changes to existing GO Bus service? *There are no plans to alter the bus service at this time, but Metrolinx will look at changes to rationalize the service in the future.*

26. Is it too early to ask about the crossing at McCowan at Bullock? Currently there are 12 trains daily, and they already delay traffic by 20 minutes. What will happen when service increases? Also the train is too long for the station at Markham. *Metrolinx is conducting a network analysis to prioritize how crossings will be addressed. We learned that when we extend the Markham station to a 12 car platform, the train blocks the street. The process has been paused to reassess our options, in discussions with the City.*

27. The Union Station Train Shed roof is very low and it is very noisy. The renovation should have extended the glass canopy across the entire roof (currently covers approximately 20%). Can anything else be done? *Union Station continues to see improvements. Heritage preservation is provincially regulated so there are limits to our abilities at this station.*

Trees

28. Have you looked at using trees for noise mitigation? *Trees as noise barriers are not very effective because there are too many gaps to block the sound.*

29. How many trees need to be removed for the Overhead Contact System in the Unionville, Markham area? *The roll plans, which are available on at gotransit.com/electrification, show the tree removal areas. The intention of the compensation strategy is to enhance and increase the tree canopy – Metrolinx is trying to set the bar higher and achieve a common standard across the GTHA.*

Smart Track

30. What is a Smart Track station? *Smart Track stations are additional stations along corridors to enable intensified connection points within the City of Toronto.*

31. Is there a difference between GO Trains and Smart Track trains? *No, they will be the same rolling stock.*

Noise and Tree-Related Feedback and Advice

Participant advice focused on reducing the amount of noise from trains, particularly from the horns which sound early in the morning. Participants were interested in stronger communication from Metrolinx around work along the corridor. Tree removal was a concern, given there are some areas and properties that have very few trees to begin with. Specific advice and suggestions for Metrolinx included:

Noise

- **Go beyond minimum noise mitigation strategies.**

- **Use a visual cue for oncoming trains instead of horns.** For example, use of an extra light (a yellow light) before the 30 second arm drop warning.
- **Review the 140 year old train horn regulation.** Limit unnecessary noise of the bells and whistles at level crossings. In this process, consider merging train noise regulations with construction noise regulations.
- **Mitigate noise at the source.** Fit train with shielded wheels to reduce noise.
- **Design noise walls that are durable, affordable, easy to maintain.**

Trees

- **Provide the number of trees that need to be removed along the corridor.** We would like to know this detail before discussing compensation strategies for tree removal.
- **Replace as many or more trees than you remove, and ensure they are of equal or better caliber.**

Other Feedback Received

Participants were interested in the progress of new stations and the fare integration work. General comments focused on providing fast, efficient, and integrated service, particularly for commuters in the last few miles of their trip. Some participants expressed support for electrification of the rail network and increased service, as well as education efforts for at-grade crossings. Specific observations, advice and suggestions for Metrolinx included:

- **You did an excellent job with the presentation, I'd like to give credit to Metrolinx.** And this is a good consultation process.
- **This approach seems very antiquated** – I've seen zero innovation, and very little design thinking in this approach. It feels like we're working backwards.
- **Provide more – not less – GO Bus stops and service.** Recognize that the GO Bus can travel faster than trains, especially during rush hour. Increase service during rush hour, and extend it to Mount Joy or Stouffville. Add stops at Highway 7, Kennedy, and the Castle Frank Subway Station.
- **Create a bus service that parallels the 15 minute service of RER.** Increased train service needs to be supported by a strong local service.
- **Consider the regional impacts of providing more local service.** The train used to bypass Danforth station, but now it stops and idles at Danforth for 5-7 minutes, with very few passengers boarding, increasing already long travel times. Metrolinx needs to recognize that there can be unintended consequences like this when service changes are made. I'm worried that what used to be a 45 minute trip will take way longer.
- **Continue to explore alternative technologies to electrification and re-examine the alternatives before capital is deployed on the project.** Check that the alternatives ruled out have not surpassed electrification as the tried and tested technology to ensure the service is not antiquated too soon.
- **Consider pairing solar tunnels with electrification infrastructure** to provide an offset to electricity use and cost. This could help with power outages, as well.
- **Consider train safety technology innovations** that allow a train to stop quickly and safely in front of a human.

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.metroinxengage.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

Participants submitted written feedback on comment forms, and in some cases, provided feedback via e-mail after the meetings until December 14, 2016. Please see the following pages for feedback received related to the November 17, 2016 Regional Open House meeting.

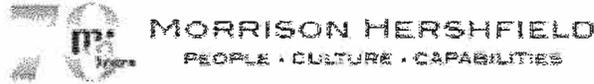
From: Britney Pringle
To: [Casey Craig](#)
Cc: [Nicole Swerhun](#); [Amber Saltarelli](#)
Subject: FW: Feedback on EA meeting held on November 17, 2016 at Cornell Community Centre
Date: Thursday, December 08, 2016 4:17:17 PM

Hi Casey,

Please see the feedback regarding the November 17th meeting at Cornell Community Centre below.

Thanks,

Britney Pringle
Environmental Planner
bpringle@morrisonhershfield.com



Suite 300, 125 Commerce Valley Drive West | Markham, ON L3T 7W4
Dir: 416 499 3110 x1011435 | Fax: 416 499 9658
morrisonhershfield.com

From: Electrification [mailto:Electrification@metrolinx.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 08, 2016 10:15 AM
To: Britney Pringle <BPringle@morrisonhershfield.com>
Subject: Fw: Feedback on EA meeting held on November 17, 2016 at Cornell Community Centre

From:
Sent: Friday, November 25, 2016 6:30 AM
To: Electrification
Subject: Re: Feedback on EA meeting held on November 17, 2016 at Cornell Community Centre

Re: Feedback on EA meeting held on November 17, 2016 at Cornell Community Centre

I completed the feedback form on paper. I am just going to type back my response.

Noise.

1. I am not sure if noise walls will be built on the stations that I am familiar with so it is hard to define my "community". If you were building noise walls within my community, design is important but it must serve its primary purpose. Durable and easy to maintain would be an asset. Hopefully construction of noise walls doesn't last too long and is affordable.

2. Who is or are affected by noise the most may be hard to identify. I would use as many avenues/ways as possible to reach as many people as possible so that there can be more

~~feedback and perspectives on noise mitigation.~~

3. On the handout provided during the meeting, we were not provided with the dBA of a Train, a Subway Train, light rail train, a Bus, a One Cargo Train vs. Two Cargo Trains (etc.)

From my experience as a commuter, I have rode the YRT, Viva, TTC, and Go Transit. Whenever a vehicle is not working properly or certain function of a vehicle is not working properly, it is very noticeable. It could be a small problem or a big problem. Depending on the vehicle the driver or staffs may not know. Commuters who use the services regularly should be able to tell the difference from noise, vibration, etc. Make sure people know how a proper functioning vehicle sound and feels like. I can elaborate on this and I think a lot of people can too.

Trees

The type of compensation I would like to see considered when trees are removed from my property is that: ~~It is not happening. No removal of our Trees because we have very little trees to begin with and they are of mature age (I think).~~

The type of compensation I would like to see considered when trees are removed from my community is that ~~the same amount of trees will be grown at another place.~~ The trees need to be ~~of the same quality and caliber in the new area~~ but trees take a long time to grow.

The type of compensation I would like to see considered when trees are removed from the watershed. Please read the community response.

My other thoughts on Trees. The removal of trees was very traumatizing for me. I rode the Stouffville line on a daily basis for many years. It was scary one day when I looked out the window and noticed that a lot of trees were removed on the line. I didn't even know when it happened. It is funny because I look out the window everyday on my morning ride as well as my evening ride. After that it felt weird looking out the windows because I am looking into people's back yard. I also started wondering what happened to those trees that were removed.

Do you have any other feed back to share at this point?

My comments on the GO system as a whole: I like the sound of the whistle although only one train comes at a time at the area I live. There were some questions/discussions about the building of bridges and walls around the GO system during the meeting. Maybe more thoughts and discussions can happen about this stuff now that we are entering the Winter season. Perhaps meetings can happen on a moving Go Train instead?

I don't know if this problem exists anymore but ~~stop trapping people on the Go Train during rush hour when something is not working properly. Let people use alternative transportation as early as possible, if they desire or they can always wait for or on the train. Their choice.~~

This e-mail is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and delete all copies of the e-mail together with any attachments.

②

NEW

~~DATE~~

12-1-1981

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