

Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council



August 27, 2021

Hon. Caroline Mulroney
Ministry of Transportation
5th Floor, 777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council Calls for an Interregional Approach to Transit and Transportation Development

Dear Minister Mulroney,

We are writing to you on behalf of [Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council](#) (Corridor Council). We are a coalition of chambers and boards of trade representing business in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) to Waterloo Region innovation corridor. Considered Canada's and the Province's largest economic zone, the Innovation Corridor consists of hundreds of thousands of Ontario businesses that generate more than \$360 billion in annual GDP.

Recently, Ontario released a discussion paper for the [Greater Golden Horseshoe \(GGH\) transportation plan](#). On behalf of the Corridor Council, we welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the transportation needs of business over the next 30 years.

Are the goals and near-term priorities and actions the right areas of focus?

The discussion paper offers a compelling vision of a more convenient, more integrated, and higher-capacity transportation network. This is the fastest growing urban region in North America, and we require the transportation system to keep pace. We support this proposed direction and encourage the government to make the investments to make it a reality, and we call on the government to be as ambitious as possible to not only maintain the status quo as we grow, but to reduce the productivity losses that we already endure every year due to the inadequacy of our transportation system.

Our transportation service of 2051 must be one to operate seamlessly, without the invisible borders that plague our current system and cause longer commutes, force people away from transit and into cars, and delays the movement of goods. Ontario has an opportunity to capitalize on existing systems and infrastructure but must acknowledge and address the challenges with interconnectedness. This includes

the streamlining of fare structure and improved integration of municipal, regional, and provincial transit systems, while respecting the autonomy of local transit systems.

The Innovation Corridor region is an integrated economic unit, which necessitates a transportation system that facilitates travel throughout the region. This is why projects like regional rail investments that provide two-way, all-day GO service on all corridors, integrated with local transit, are critical to enabling economic growth. This includes building on the announced Federal support for two-way, all-day service on the Milton Corridor, as well as Bowmanville. The discussion paper's proposal to establish ten-minute frequency on local transit will be a key step to improve access for workers to jobs, and for employers to talent. It will also facilitate the development of transit-oriented communities. We also consider the proposal for circumferential cross-regional rapid transit to be compelling, linking the region's municipalities to each other and to key nodes like Pearson Airport, without forcing riders to pass through Toronto's congested downtown core.

In addition to connectivity, users are looking for more choice. This must include active transit, sustainable modes of transport, and innovative transportation models. A transportation system which integrates new technologies will not only improve the movement of people and goods. It will also improve opportunities for the innovative businesses already working on the future of connected, electric, and autonomous vehicles. There are many opportunities to learn from other jurisdictions and from partnerships with academic institutions about how data are collected and used to inform short-and long-term transportation planning. Transportation emissions reductions create a huge opportunity and will improve regional competitiveness in pursuit of net zero by 2050.

Continued support for transit-oriented communities entails both opportunities for intensification of existing communities and also for greenfield projects to be built in a way that is transit-supportive. Sprawl as usual cannot continue, we need to strive for complete communities and stringent guidelines must be in place to ensure sustainable growth occurs, which requires considerations on green building standards and the concentration of development, particularly office employment, around transit routes.

The Innovation Corridor council also supports key highway investments that support economic growth. A focus on investments to support movement of goods and the resilience of supply chains is particularly critical. Other key goods movement infrastructure, like CN's Milton Hub, will bolster the region's global competitiveness. We also call on the government to work with Highway 407 ETR to improve its viability as a route for goods movement.

Improvements to ports and airports, including the surrounding infrastructure and connectivity of these hubs, will ensure a strong supply chain and interconnection on a national and global scale. Exploring opportunities associated with designated lanes for trucks, electric vehicles, high occupancy vehicles, and connected and autonomous vehicles may further support this movement of goods.

What else should be done in the near-term?

The vision of interconnectedness must be executed now, before we fall farther behind. It can be expensive and disruptive to retrofit existing transit infrastructure, and the province has an opportunity to embed an effective transportation system in the development stages of new communities. There is rapid growth in the eastern and western GTHA, with the Oshawa Census Metropolitan Area leading the country in population growth in 2020. There is no time to waste.

While building infrastructure can take many years, there are many improvements that can be implemented on very short timelines, such as fare integration and bus service improvements. These will lay a strong foundation for future improvements.

The province is leading an unprecedented investment in transportation infrastructure. That infrastructure must be designed and delivered in a way that maximizes value for the money invested, and continued steps to expedite the delivery of key projects, like the Building Transit Faster Act, are essential.

Are there implementation considerations as we develop the GGH Transportation Plan and turn the 2051 vision into reality?

The future transportation system must extend benefits to as many communities as possible. Oftentimes communities on the edges of the GTHA only benefit from a small portion of network improvements. As projects are prioritized, there needs to be a focus on those that deliver the greatest benefits to the broadest cross-section of communities. This includes new transit, and opportunities for additional highway development are encouraged where environmental concerns are mitigated, such as the GTA West Corridor.

Proposals for issues like road pricing should take into account the need for fairness between communities, and ensure that they do not hamper the effectiveness of infrastructure investments for the movement of goods. A highway that is priced higher in one region than another, such as Highway 412 or Highway 418, is not equitable, and a highway that is too expensive for most trucks to use will not deliver needed economic or congestion-relief benefits.

The GGH transportation plan was presented with three pillars; getting people moving on a connected transit system; enhancing capacity and performance on congested roads, and; efficiently moving goods across the region. These pillars resonate with the business community, but we must ensure our plan for the future benefits all communities and moves at a pace to meet the needs of a quickly expanding region.

Kind regards,



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Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce
Co-Chair, Canada's Innovation Corridor Business
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Jan De Silva, President & CEO
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cc. *Members of the Canada's Innovation Corridor Business Council:*

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