

SmartTrack

Consultation Report

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Prepared by City of Toronto



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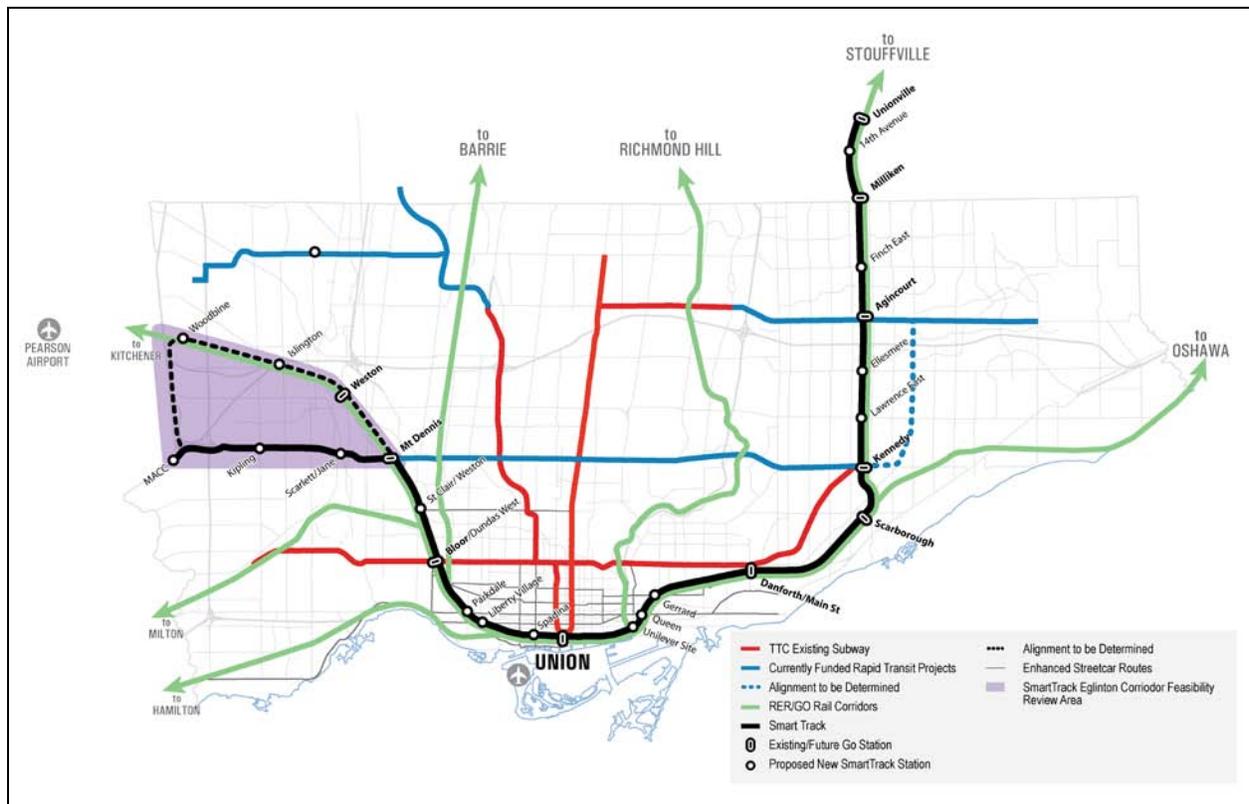
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Overview/Study Objectives

The City of Toronto and TTC are working with Metrolinx to study SmartTrack, which proposes enhancements to three corridors in the GO Regional Express Rail (RER) program; the Kitchener, Lakeshore East and Stouffville GO corridors. SmartTrack also proposes a new corridor to connect Mount Dennis and the Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre (MACC). The GO RER program will bring improvements to key segments of existing GO corridors with electric GO service operating every 15 minutes

or better throughout the day, evening and weekend.

SmartTrack proposes additional stations on the Stouffville/Lakeshore East and Kitchener corridors to enhance local train service, plus the addition of the new western heavy rail corridor that would provide a new and seamless service between Mississauga and Markham. To that end, Metrolinx, City of Toronto, TTC and neighbouring municipalities are working cooperatively on SmartTrack.



SmartTrack and Eglinton Avenue West Feasibility Review

Background

The SmartTrack workplan was approved by City Council (February, 2015) to begin assessing and developing the SmartTrack plan. Public outreach and engagement was included as part of the workplan, to inform and seek feedback on how SmartTrack can be built into the GO RER program and as an opportunity for public input into the overall SmartTrack plan.

The province has committed \$13.5 billion to the GO RER program (Budget 2015), which will bring more trips to all 7 GO rail corridors. Every area will see improvements, whether through more two-way, all-day service, or more rush hour train trips. This includes electric trains running every 15 minutes or better, all day and in both directions within the most heavily travelled sections of the network. These benefits apply to various segments of the GO rail network including Kitchener, Lakeshore East and Stouffville GO corridors within the City of Toronto boundaries.

SmartTrack proposes enhancements to the RER program through the addition of more stations along specific segments of the Kitchener, Lakeshore East and Stouffville GO corridors. SmartTrack also proposes a new heavy rail spur line off the Kitchener corridor between Mount Dennis and the Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre (MACC), with a vision for new seamless rail service between Mississauga and Markham.

For reference, the chart below identifies the common components shared between the Regional Express Rail program and SmartTrack, and where these plans differ.

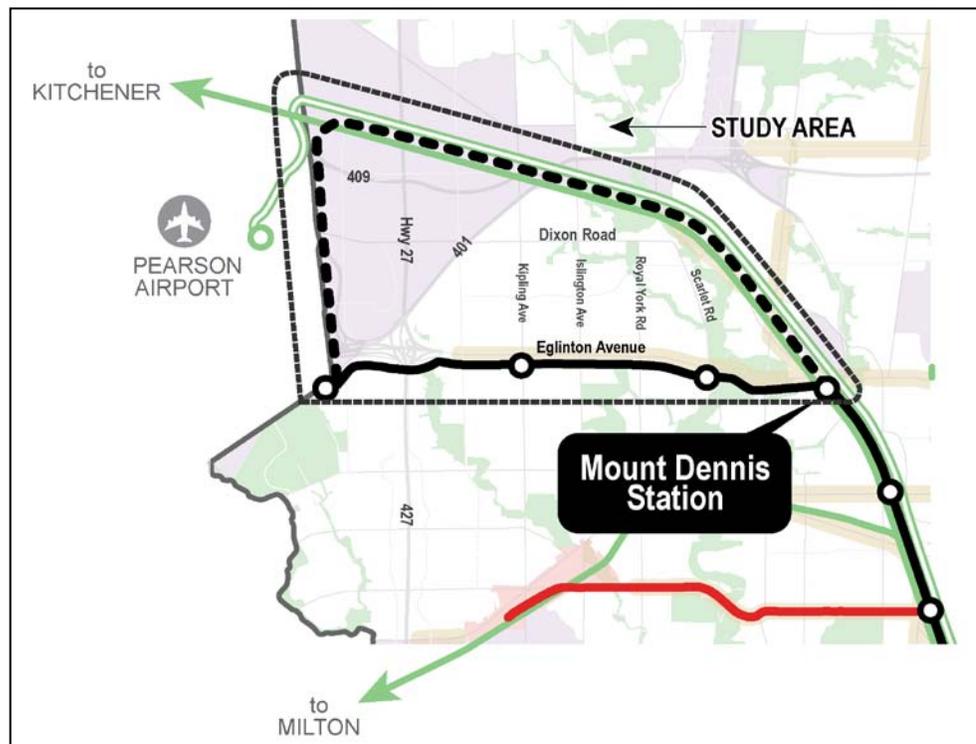
GO Regional Express Rail	SmartTrack
General	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service frequency of 15 minutes or better • Mix of all-stop and limited stop service in both directions • Simplified Fare Strategy and expanded Presto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service frequency of 15 minutes or better • All stop service in both directions • TTC fare option
Stouffville and Lakeshore East GO Corridors (<i>Unionville to Union Station</i>)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 existing GO stations • New stations may be considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 existing GO stations • 7 new stations (1 in the City of Markham/Region of York)
Kitchener GO Corridor (<i>Mt. Dennis to Union Station</i>)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 existing GO station (Bloor) and 1 future GO station (Mt. Dennis) • New station options may be considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 existing GO station (Bloor) and 1 future GO station (Mt. Dennis) • 4 new stations (including station between Queen St W and Dundas St W)
Eglinton West (<i>Mt. Dennis to Airport Corporate Centre</i>)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in RER plan. Extension of Eglinton Crosstown LRT to Pearson Airport is an unfunded project in Metrolinx's plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies a new heavy rail corridor to Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre (MACC) with 3 new stations at Scarlett, Kipling, and the MACC (Council requested an additional option to extend along Kitchener GO with stations at Weston, Islington and Woodbine)

The City of Toronto is undertaking a feasibility review to present corridor options that have the potential to make the connection between Mount Dennis and the MACC. The study area identifies the general area for the feasibility study, as seen in the map below.

Seven corridors (See Appendix A) were presented at the public meetings, along with a base case of the approved Eglinton Light Rail Transit (LRT) extension, against which these corridors are compared.

- Corridors 1A, 1B, 1C presented options for heavy rail corridor along Eglinton Avenue West from Mount Dennis to MACC.
- Corridors 2A, 2B, 2C presented options to continue further on the Kitchener GO Train line and turn south near Highway 427 and head towards the MACC.
- Corridor 3A presented an alignment along Eglinton Avenue West that was a separate track from the Kitchener GO Train line, requiring a passenger transfer at Mount Dennis.

The base reference case was also presented at the public meetings, which is the Phase 2 Eglinton LRT extension from Mount Dennis to the MACC and then north towards Pearson International Airport.



SmartTrack Eglinton Avenue West Feasibility Review Study Area

Feedback

Many comments and questions were received about GO RER, SmartTrack, and the SmartTrack Western Corridor Feasibility Review at the coordinated public consultation meetings that took place in June 2015, and through the various consultation tools and activities, demonstrating a great deal of community and stakeholder interest in the projects.

The purpose of the consultation process was to engage with and seek input from the public. The consultation objectives for each program are described in the chart below. Each initiative provided information about its proposed improvements, timing, rationale and other steps in the projects.

Consultation Objectives		
GO RER	SmartTrack	SmartTrack Western Corridor Feasibility Review
<i>To inform</i> and answer questions on the RER program, including electrification and benefits specific to Toronto residents, and areas of congruency with SmartTrack	<i>To inform and seek input</i> on the SmartTrack plan	<i>To inform and seek input</i> on the feasibility of 7 corridor options

A summary of the themes from the consultations related to SmartTrack and the Western Corridor Feasibility Review are presented below. Themes will help illustrate common topics or areas of concern, which the City of Toronto will consider as the projects proceed. Feedback on GO RER is also compiled below as a record of public input.

All feedback related to the GO RER and SmartTrack initiatives is recorded in Appendix B.

GO Regional Express Rail

An open-ended question on the GO RER program asked "What are your views on the GO RER improvements? (includes: electrification, fare integration and service improvements on the GO Rail network providing 15 minute GO service)". Most comments were positive for all of the RER improvements. People also supported additional stations and fare integration.

SmartTrack

Two questions were presented on the general SmartTrack plan. A mixed range of comments was received to the question "What are your views on SmartTrack? (Includes: GO RER improvements, and additional proposed stations in the City of Toronto)". Some positive feedback related to fare integration with TTC, electrification and frequency of service. Other comments were concerned that SmartTrack was redundant with GO RER and that it would add further pressure to the crowding experienced at Union Station. A few comments were concerned with the potential impacts of SmartTrack stations on local community and surrounding land uses. In particular there were concerns regarding a possible SmartTrack station stop at Queen Street East. This station did not perform well in the Relief Line Project

Assessment, and participants thought this station option should also not be considered as part of SmartTrack.

Many comments were related to network coordination and prioritizing SmartTrack over the other projects concurrently being studied (Scarborough Subway Extension and Relief Line project assessments). Some thought these other transit projects were more suitable to providing local access.

From the initial review of comments, as well as drawing upon staff conversations with residents during the public meetings, it should be noted that some residents asked more questions to help clarify how the GO RER and SmartTrack were distinct and how they worked together.

Themes	City Response
Impacts of SmartTrack stations on local community and surrounding land uses.	A detailed station and corridor analysis will inform the evaluation of SmartTrack.
Network coordination of SmartTrack with other transit projects.	Detailed modelling is currently underway to understand how each corridor option may impact the transit network.
Information clarifying how GO RER and SmartTrack relate to each other.	City of Toronto, TTC and Metrolinx continue to work closely together in the development of GO RER and SmartTrack, and will provide updated information about SmartTrack as the project progresses.

SmartTrack Western Heavy Rail Corridor Feasibility Review

Several questions were framed around content on the display boards. The first two questions asked for participant feedback on the City's study process to analyze and review the 7 corridor options. Another set of three questions asked for participant feedback on the corridors themselves.

Analysis and Review Process Questions

The first question asked "Are there specific questions that should be addressed in the feasibility review?" A variety of comments were received from participants. Some participants indicated that land use was a concern particularly for communities and areas that would be affected. Some comments related to the service concept, looking for a better understanding of how heavy rail would impact other transit service. Other comments related to technical analysis and asked if building heavy rail along the Eglinton corridor is feasible from an engineering and operations standpoint.

Theme	City Response
Land Use – affecting communities	A detailed station and corridor analysis will consider land use matters and will inform the evaluation.
Service Concept – impacts to other transit	Detailed modelling is currently underway to understand how each corridor option may impact the transit network.
Technical – engineering and operations	Engineering and operational concerns will be addressed as part of the overall feasibility analysis.

Corridors, Conceptual Alignments, and Stations

With regard to the second question "Looking at the potential Corridors, conceptual alignments and stations display boards: What are your views on the heavy rail corridors that are identified for review?", a majority of participants indicated that the Base Reference Case LRT was preferred. Many indicated that they believed the LRT technology was appropriate for the Eglinton corridor and provided station stops that served the surrounding neighbourhoods well, in addition to the Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre and Pearson Airport. A few participants noted that although they were in support of the Base Reference Case LRT, they were also opposed to heavy rail along the Eglinton corridor. They would like some improvements to the LRT including grade separations and/or fewer station stops to improve speed and travel times.

Corridors 1A, 1B, and 1C had mixed to neutral feedback from participants, who thought that continuous service (no transfer) along this part of Eglinton Avenue West was good but were unsure if heavy rail was the best technology. A few participants felt that more station stops would be needed to provide better service to surrounding neighbourhoods. A few others felt that service was too similar to the one provided by the Union Pearson Express train; it is important to note, however, that corridors 1A, 1B, and 1C do not connect to Pearson International Airport and only connect to the MACC.

Corridors 2A, 2B, and 2C had mixed feedback from participants. A few participants stated that they liked the idea of continuing the service along the existing GO Kitchener corridor and that it reaches neighbourhoods further north of Eglinton Avenue West. Some responses suggested that running heavy rail along Highway 427 might create further complications with other initiatives around the highway, which will need to be further understood. A few felt that the corridors were very circuitous and would not do a good job attracting commuters to choose transit over a private vehicle.

Comments for Corridor 3A were negative stating that the Base Reference Case LRT would better serve this corridor, since Corridor 3A would not offer continuous service from the heavy rail corridor.

The next question asked "Have we missed any corridors?" One respondent noted that CP Rail Milton Corridor might be an option to consider. However, this corridor was determined to be out of scope as it was outside of the study area and did not connect to the Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre.

With regard to the question "Do you have any comments on the station locations?" a large number of respondents felt that more station stops would be required along the proposed corridors to better serve the surrounding neighbourhoods.

The comments received on the new SmartTrack corridor options will be considered in the feasibility review. They will help shape the results of the review and any recommendations brought forward to Council.

Public Consultation

Public consultation for SmartTrack (including Western Heavy Rail Corridor Feasibility Review) and GO RER was coordinated with the Relief Line and Scarborough Subway Extension transit planning projects

through a series of 8 public meetings across the city where residents could learn about each project. Hosting these meetings not only provided more opportunities for engagement beyond each project's study area, but also showed how these projects would work together to improve the overall transit network.

Notification

The following means of notification were used to advertise the dates, times and locations for each of the 8 public meetings, and the dedicated webpage (www.toronto.ca/TransitTO) that linked to the four other transit projects' webpages. These activities included city-wide and local notification efforts especially within the community located in Etobicoke.

- Newspaper advertisements
 - The Etobicoke Guardian (Thursday June 4)
 - The York Guardian (Thursday June 4)
 - 24 Hours (May 29, 2015) and,
 - Metro News (May 29, 2015).
- Webpages:
 - a dedicated Transit webpage www.toronto.ca/TransitTO was included in the advertisements as the landing page for all other transit planning initiatives' webpages
 - www.toronto.ca/smartrack
 - www.reliefline.ca
 - www.scarboroughsubwayextension.ca
 - Partner agency webpages also linked to the dedicated transit webpage
 - www.ttc.ca
 - www.metrolinx.com

The same advertisement copy was issued for each newspaper publication and can be found in Appendix C. From the first public notice on May 29, residents had 35 calendar days to learn about the SmartTrack initiative, attend one of the eight scheduled public information centres, contact City of Toronto staff with any questions, and provide feedback.

The following shows a break-down of the major communication and outreach channels:

Notification and consultation activities	Counts
www.toronto.ca/TransitTO	2,390 visits (2,947 views)
www.toronto.ca/SmartTrack	994 visits (1,262 views)
Online Survey (GO RER/SmartTrack)	1 submission
Online Survey (SmartTrack Eglinton West Feasibility Review)	13 submissions
Emails received	16
Phone calls	0
Mailed- and Handed-in Comment Sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GO RER/SmartTrack • SmartTrack Eglinton Avenue West Feasibility Review 	5 8
Sticky Notes at PICS (SmartTrack Eglinton Feasibility Review)	98

Public Information Centres

A series of 8 public information centres (PICs) located across the City of Toronto allowed residents to attend, learn about these three transit initiatives, speak one-on-one with staff, engage with other residents and provide feedback. The same information was available at all PICs. See Appendix C for the dates and locations of each PIC.

Two PICs took place in Etobicoke neighbourhoods:

Saturday June 13

Burnhamthorpe Collegiate Institute

500 The East Mall

Time: 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Thursday June 18

Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School

99 Humber Boulevard South

Time: 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm

These meetings followed a similar format:

1. Doors Open / Browse display boards
2. Presentation from staff
3. Question and Answer
4. Browse display boards
5. Closing

Summaries (including the number of participants) of each public meeting are available in Appendix D and online at www.toronto.ca/smartrack.

Online consultation

A dedicated project webpage was created for SmartTrack (toronto.ca/smartrack) and included relevant project information, such as background reports from City Council and TTC, the Province, Metrolinx, an overview of the proposed work plan, and related links. This webpage was the one-window access to project information, contacts and the following public meeting materials:

1. PIC presentation
2. PIC Display Boards – including GO RER and SmartTrack, and SmartTrack Western Heavy Rail Corridor Review
3. Online comment forms – for GO RER and SmartTrack, and SmartTrack Western Heavy Rail Corridor Review

The Metrolinx website also linked to the SmartTrack webpage to re-direct viewers to the City webpage for more information.

Media Coverage

On June 10th and 22nd, City of Toronto staff issued two media releases as part of the launch of public consultations. Media were also present at a number of the public information centres, including:

1. The Scarborough Mirror
2. CP 24
3. 680 News
4. The Bulletin
5. Radio Canada
6. Toronto Star
7. Global TV

Both media releases are available online and in Appendix E.

Next Steps

GO RER

To deliver GO RER within 10 years, planning, design, environmental assessment, construction and new service introduction must all occur concurrently across the network. New service will be introduced on an incremental basis over the next decade. A detailed phasing plan is now being developed. In the meantime, Environmental Assessments will be completed for all new major infrastructure, and some are already underway. An updated schedule of what Environmental Assessments are underway and what's planned will be available for the next round of outreach in November.

Infrastructure needs include new track, new electric trains, new maintenance facilities, new bridges and tunnels to eliminate intersections with rail and road traffic, station renovations, and assessing feasibility of new stations. There is also an electrification plan which requires a multi-corridor electrification EA getting underway now. (More details will be available for the next round of outreach in November)

The journey to and from GO services - the first mile and last mile - is also crucial to RER's success. There is more work to be done on active transportation services, integrating local transit, station access (drop-off/pick-up areas and station parking). Work also continues on plans to improve integration of the regional transit network through GTHA fare and service integration. Seamless fares and integration of GO RER with subway, LRT and BRT, for example, will greatly improve the customer experience. (Update **may** be available for next round of outreach in November)

SmartTrack and Eglinton Avenue West

The City of Toronto, TTC, Metrolinx, and neighbouring municipalities continue to work together on SmartTrack. SmartTrack will require further analysis, including ridership modelling, station analysis, service concept development, and, infrastructure and financing requirements. More details on these next steps will be available for the next round of public consultation in Fall 2015.

The Western Corridor Feasibility Review is part of the overall SmartTrack plan. The feasibility analysis will be concluded over the summer, with further consultation in the Fall.