

PRESS RELEASE

May 16, 2011

NO LITTLE PLAN: ELECTRIFYING GO TRANSIT by Greg Gormick

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Co-sponsored: Transport Action Canada, Clean Train Coalition, Canadian Auto Workers, and Transport Action Ontario.

TRANSPORT ACTION CANADA and the CLEAN TRAIN COALITION have jointly released a rail electrification report for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

The report, entitled *No Little Plan: Electrifying GO Transit*, is written by Greg Gormick, a leading rail transportation and transit consultant and journalist. The report was jointly funded by the John McCullum fund of Transport Action Canada, and by the Canadian Auto Workers. It was commissioned to encourage the Government of Ontario to commit fully and promptly to a regional electric rail plan.

A pdf copy of *No Little Plan*, and an Executive Summary, will be available Monday, May 16, 2011, in the afternoon on the website of Transport Action Canada (site listed below).

No Little Plan reviews the well-known benefits of rail electrification, analyzes the key findings of the numerous previous electrification studies already done by GO or the Province since 1980, critically dissects Metrolinx's latest January 2011 electrification study, and proposes a new direction for regional rail service in the GTHA - the European-style "urban rail" network using electric multiple unit (EMU) trains.

Metrolinx released its latest electrification study in January, 2011. The report recommended electrification of GO's Georgetown and Lakeshore lines, with construction starting roughly in 2018 and completing in 2034. The Air Rail Link along the Georgetown corridor would start up as a diesel service and be converted to electric later.

"We wanted to set the record straight," said **Carina Cojeen**, co-chair of the Clean Train Coalition. "There are a lot of myths about Metrolinx's diesel train expansion, especially the ARL to the airport. Gormick was asked to look at the history of electrification studies so that we could tell our members, and the public, that asking GO to electrify is truly the most cost-effective way forward, and the way forward that will get world class regional rail like the RER in Paris or the S-Bahn in Berlin to the Toronto region sooner rather than later."

"Metrolinx's own regional transportation plan *The Big Move* (2008) came out in favour of a European-style electric regional rail system" said **Greg Gormick** author of the *No Little Plan* report. "The only way to shift people to transit across the Toronto region is to electrify quickly, adopting EMU train technology. Experience from many other cities around the world, including in the U.S., shows that we can do this without taking decades. Buying more diesels and holding off on electrification will add hundreds of millions of dollars to the cost of bringing in over ground rapid rail, besides keeping us prisoners to cars and congestion," Gormick pointed out.

"This report is especially timely right now," said **Peter Miasek**, President of Transport Action Ontario.

“First, it shows how money and time can be saved by electrifying faster than proposed in the Metrolinx plan. Secondly, the 'urban rail' concept has great potential to be more cost effective and quicker to build than subways, while still meeting Toronto Mayor Ford’s recent directive to not construct rapid transit that impairs car movement. We urge the City, Metrolinx and the Province to carefully review this report and start down the implementation path now”

Transport Action Canada is a nation-wide non-government organization advocating for sustainable transportation since its founding in 1976 as Transport 2000 Canada. Transport Action Ontario is the regional branch organization. Website: www.transport-action.ca.

The Clean Train Coalition (CTC), founded in 2009, comprises residents and community groups along the GO Transit Georgetown rail corridor opposed to a future of hundreds of noisy and dangerously polluting diesel trains passing through their neighbourhoods daily. Website: www.cleantrain.ca.

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BRIEF SUMMARY- NO LITTLE PLAN: ELECTRIFYING GO TRANSIT by Greg Gormick

Introduction

GO Transit, launched in 1967, was North America's first post-war new commuter rail service, later copied in a number of other North American cities.

GO and the GTHA are now at a crossroads. A vastly expanded GO is slated to change the region's commuting habits and land use patterns. But the only way to achieve change on that scale is an aggressive conversion of GO to clean, quiet and cost-effective electric operation with electric multiple unit (EMU) trains.

This report was commissioned to encourage the Government of Ontario to commit fully and promptly to a regional electric rail plan.

Chapter 1. Rail Electrification's History of Excellence

Electrification in North America progressed rapidly from 1895 to World War II

After World War II, rail electrification continued in Europe but stalled in North America.

Today, North America has re-awakened to electrification's potential. This is partly due to high speed rail projects in Europe, Asia, and now even in the U.S. But equally, interest has been generated by the need to consider mobility options other than driving and flying which are dependent on fossil fuels.

Chapter 2. GO Electrification Studies: 1980-2001

The benefits and the means of electrifying GO have been studied on numerous occasions in the past. Each of the previous studies contains data still relevant to the issue today.

Chapter 3. Enter Metrolinx

Metrolinx was established in 2003 by the Province to plan and coordinate transportation within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

In 2008, the government accepted Metrolinx’s regional transportation plan *The Big Move*. Express rail,

defined as “*high speed trains, typically electric, serving primarily long-distance regional trips with two-way all-day service,*” was a cornerstone of the plan. The inspiration for this program was provided by the electrified, high-frequency urban rail systems of Western Europe, such as the Paris RER and the German S-Bahnen.

MetroLinx then commissioned a follow-up study for the Lakeshore. Electrification of this corridor was pegged at \$4 billion, including contingencies. This large price tag seemed to discourage MetroLinx and electrification started to fade away once again.

Electrification was soon back on the table with the Air Rail Link (ARL) project. This was conceived as a diesel multiple unit (DMU) service that would put 150 trains a day between Toronto's Union Station and Pearson Airport. Citizen opposition to diesel and support to "go electric", led by the Clean Train Coalition, induced the McGuinty government to undertake a new \$4 million "comprehensive review" of GO electrification.

Chapter 4. The MetroLinx GO Electrification Study

The 1,705-page GO Electrification Study Final Report was released January 19, 2011. Observers were pleasantly surprised that a phased electrification plan was recommended for the ARL/Georgetown and Lakeshore corridors, with the former as the first priority. The two-route plan was approved unanimously by the MetroLinx directors and Minister of Transportation Kathleen Wynne announced the initiation of the Environmental Assessment process (EA).

Estimated cost of system-wide electrification was \$ 1.6-1.8 billion, substantially less than the cost first mooted.

Construction would start in 2018 with the final segment completed in 2035.

Although the report was generally positive, there were a number of contradictions, false assumptions, and omissions that need to be challenged:

- Reference case falls far short of what was envisioned in *The Big Move*;
- Tier 4 diesel motive power was assumed to be available when no manufacturer has yet produced a commercially viable Tier 4 diesel;
- Equipment selected was electric locomotives rather than EMUs.
- Health, environmental, social and community benefits were undervalued;
- Beneficial economic impacts were not adequately explored;
- Time frames (21-24 years for completion) are excessive
- Although it has become clear that the 2015 start-up of the ARL as a diesel-powered service is a “done deal”, many questions remain on this project.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite initiation of the EA process, the fight for GO electrification has not yet been won. As with many other Ontario transit programs that were supposedly assured, there has been far too much talk and too little action.

GO electrification only became an issue because of public scrutiny and advocacy. If electrification is to be implemented as promised, then the public will need to keep up the campaign. If the government is sincere in involving citizens in this process, it should maintain and strengthen the stakeholder workshop process that was in place throughout the one-year GO Electrification Study.

If GO electrification is to be implemented as promised, there are measures that need to be taken soon, including:

- an accelerated and expanded electrification planning and construction program;
- international peer input;
- freight railway consultation; and
- adoption of the European Urban Rail Concept...as envisaged by *The Big Move*.