



Building Ontario Up

OPTA's Response to the Ministry of Economic Development Employment and Infrastructure's Discussion Guide for Moving Ontario Forward – Outside the GTHA

September 2015

Background:

The Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure (MEDEI) recently released its [Discussion Guide for Moving Ontario Forward – Outside the GTHA](#). The Discussion Guide seeks public consultation on setting the framework to prioritize projects to be funded from the \$15 billion for regions outside the GTHA that forms part of the overall \$31.5 billion in total investment under the Moving Ontario Forward. The remaining \$16.5 (the difference between \$31.5 billion and 15 billion) has been allocated for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Of the \$15 billion, \$3.5 billion has been allocated to regional projects (such as regional natural gas program) with the balance of \$11.5 billion being allocated to potential projects such as expanding GO services outside the GTHA, municipal rapid transit projects and expanded highway investment.

The Discussion Guide launches the consultation process with the view of developing the prioritization framework associated with the \$15 billion in future infrastructure investment. OPTA members are encouraged to participate in the stakeholder consultations scheduled to occur during the summer of 2015. The following constitutes OPTA's response to the MEDEI Discussion Guide.

Investment in Public Transit:

Transportation and land use planning are inextricably linked. The objectives and success of one is directly related/dependent upon the objectives and success of the other. A growing and critical component of today's communities is the growing and critical role public transit plays in the economic, environmental and community access benefits/returns to a community.

Public transit is a vital link in how Ontario communities function - in their competitiveness and attractiveness as a place to invest and do business, as well as places to work, live and play. Cities and communities are the economic drivers of the province, and in turn the country. Cities and communities are centres of employment, social development, culture and wealth creation.

Further, demographic trends point to an aging population which will present increasing mobility challenges for communities. At the same time, a younger generation is looking for mobility options without the need to own a car. Population growth, plus growth in actual transit ridership and service expectations have exceeded the capacity of transit systems to effectively and efficiently respond to these

demands and to effectively grow communities. Many communities face a transportation/transit infrastructure deficit. The ability of municipalities to respond on their own to the growth pressures is limited by their economic capacity to raise the necessary investment given competing demands, the economic health of the community and the limited and constrained nature of revenue tools. Investment should be the shared responsibility of communities and the provincial and federal levels of government.

Decision Making Process and Inputs:

The metric for the decision-making process should be evidenced-based, supporting value (or return) for the investment. The rigors of the decision-making process have to ensure that politics are taken out of the process by creating a framework based on transparency and legitimacy of public investment alternatives, thereby ensuring a level playing field for all regions.

The overarching criteria for decision making should focus on the economic, social and environmental impact of the investment decision, supporting the continued, sustainable growth of communities and in turn the province and country. This focus should extend to decisions on project investment/support.

Transportation/transit projects warranting consideration should clearly demonstrate the following:

- needs justification report for the project;
- the project is a clear priority of the community (municipal council) and has gone through a public consultation process;
- there is a clear linkage to a community's Official Plan linking land use (community growth and development) and transportation planning;
- the project is an integral component of a community's Transportation Master Plan – a master plan that is congruent with the direction, policies and programs of the community's Official Plan;
- there is an accompanying Financial Plan – setting out both capital and operating investment requirements and how such investments are to be accommodated over time. The Financial Plan would identify investment partners and should have as a companion document and a related Asset Management Program (strategy);and
- there is a defined Business Case that identifies investment needs and measures investment returns both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. The Business Case should also include a sensitivity analysis of the identified returns. The impacts/ returns would consider:
 - economic development benefits both short and longer term;
 - transportation user benefits – impact on travel time, reduced gridlock, and transportation pocket book costs;
 - environmental impact – reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved local air quality; and
 - social and community impact- impact on employment access and greater access and mobility for various socio-demographic groups

Recommendation:

The Ontario transit industry requests the Government give consideration to the above discussion in establishing the decision metric. Further, the industry would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss the above, in greater detail with the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure officials as may be appropriate.