

ON TRACK STRATEGIES

OSHAWA, ONTARIO – STUDIO CITY, CALIFORNIA

MEDIA SUMMARY

Milton's Corridor of Opportunities: Fast-Tracking GO Rail Improvements



Photo © 2015 by and courtesy of Walter Pfefferle

By Greg Gormick

For

***Councillor John Challinor II
Town of Milton***

—•—

October 22, 2019

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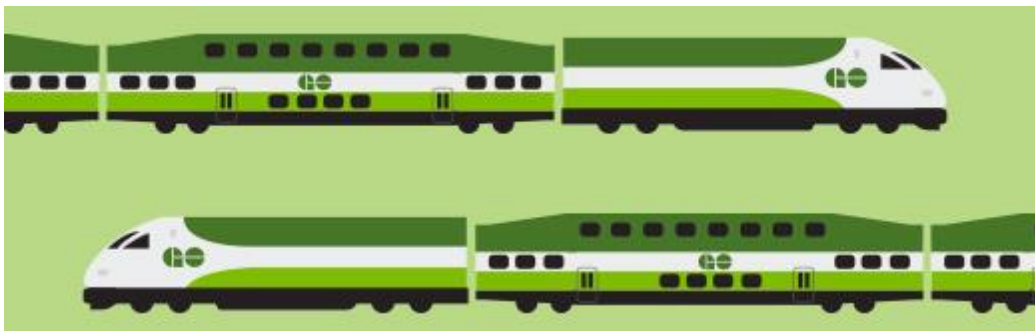
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(2002 – 2005)

and

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(1995 – 2000)

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A Milton High-Performance Commuter Rail Solution

This report is a response to two questions posed by Milton's MP and Canada's former Minister of Transport, the Hon. Lisa Raitt, and Milton Councillor John Challinor on September 9, 2019.

That these two questions were asked clearly of me for the first time in more than 30 years of dealing with and working for elected officials on transportation subjects was refreshing. That other politicians have never asked them so directly is discouraging, though understandable.

The questions posed by MP Raitt and Councillor Challinor were:

- Can some of the oft-promised, never-delivered expansion of Milton's GO commuter rail service occur without massive spending and more delay?
- Can an elected federal representative positively influence what is perceived to be solely a provincial issue?

My answer to both questions was the same: "Yes."

While many questions concerning GO Milton Line expansion have been asked in the past by others, they have generally lacked the benefit of any intimate knowledge of the commuter rail industry. As a result, the hollow answers provided by various vested interests have gone unchallenged by those questioners, who were (admittedly) not transport professionals. The fault rests not with those asking the questions in the past, but with those who have provided incomplete or even diversionary answers on behalf of various political parties and Government of Ontario agencies, principally GO Transit's parent, Metrolinx.

On the basis of the issues explored with MP Raitt and Councillor Challinor on September 9th, this report was commissioned by the latter to clear away these undocumented and misleading non-answers of the past, as well as end the frustrating delays they produced. I have, therefore, listed and explained the not insurmountable challenges; some real and many overstated. I have also sketched some of the real-world solutions to overcome the roadblocks preventing Milton's rail service from growing under an incremental and fiscally-justifiable "fast-track" plan, which is something Metrolinx has never been produced for this or any other line in the GO network.

It is hoped this evidence-based response to the questions posed by MP Raitt and Councillor Challinor provides practical answers and will lead to a serious, expedited review by seasoned and independent professionals of Milton's and all of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area's commuter rail services. The need is urgent. The clock is ticking. Time is growing short.

Greg Gormick

*On Track Strategies
Oshawa, ON and Studio City, CA*



A MILTON LINE ROLE MODEL: Once among the laggards of the North American commuter rail industry, Metra and the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District are engaged in a multi-billion-dollar program to incrementally improve, expand and extend the Greater Chicago Region’s 12-line, tristate system. Photos courtesy of Metra



Executive Summary

Milton's Corridor of Opportunities is based on a simple question first posed on September 9th by Milton MP Lisa Raitt: "Is incremental and affordable improvement of the Milton GO commuter rail service possible?" It provides a simple answer: "Yes." The methods and the costs to do this have been known for decades, but have been hidden by various provincial agencies and their political masters.

The second question underlying this report is: "Can a federal official bring some pressure to bear on the institutional and political intransigence delaying it?" Again, the answer is: "Yes."

This report points out that no one in a position of political authority or influence has previously posed these questions directly – or questioned the answers provided, which have generally been limp and unconvincing excuses from Metrolinx (**Appendix A**) and other Crown agencies still staffed by executives hired by the previous Liberal government, which created Metrolinx against expert advice in 2006.

The current Government of Ontario has so far done little to change this, and it needs to be encouraged to do so quickly. Interaction with this government and its various transportation agencies has produced no assurance that change is coming (**Appendices B and C**).

Milton's Corridor of Opportunities is based on five concepts employed by On Track Strategies on all high-performance rail (HPR) and transit solutions:

- *Mobility + Access = Destiny*
- *Optimization Before Investment*
- *Adopt, Adapt and Optimize*
- *Reduce – Reuse – Recycle*
- *Do It Once – Do It Right!*

The report draws on other On Track Strategies studies of similar situations:

This is High-Performance Rail (Appendix D)

<http://allboardstmarys.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/HPR-Discussion-Paper-Final-160903.pdf>

and

SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Transportation for Southwestern Ontario

http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Portals/15/Documents/SpeakUpOxford/2018/SouthwestLynx/SouthwestLynx_20180627_e_version.pdf

In outlining the case for achievable "early win" Milton Line improvements, reference is made to the all-day, two-way service scenarios drafted and costed more than 25 years by GO – before it was swallowed by the politicized and controversial Metrolinx in 2009 .

Milton’s Corridor of Opportunities describes the problems and solutions, using real-world approaches crafted elsewhere in North America. It specifically addresses a simple and useful improvement suggested by the Hon. Lisa Raitt: The addition of at least one mid-day, weekday train to assist families destined for Toronto and other points along the route for off-peak, non-commuter purposes, such as medical appointments, cultural events and leisure activities.

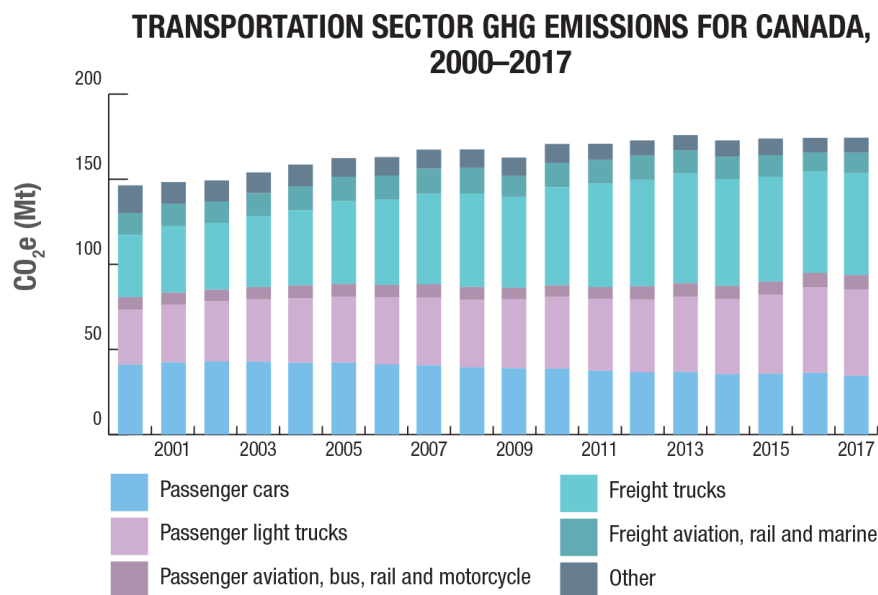
The report establishes such additions are feasible now using existing, provincially-owned assets and resources, plus those of the privately-owned Canadian Pacific Railway (CP), on which the Milton Line service is dependent.

Contrary to popular belief, CP has always supported the expansion of GO and other passenger services operated on or proposed for its lines – provided certain reasonable capacity expansion measures are taken to protect its main business, which is the on-time movement of its time-sensitive freight traffic. This pro-passenger CP position has led to the company to be repeatedly ranked by Amtrak – the U.S. equivalent of VIA Rail Canada – as its best host freight railway.

<http://media.amtrak.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Amtrak-Host-Railroad-Report-Card-and-Route-Grades-2018-with-FAQs.pdf>

Using these concepts, and cognizant of the operational prerequisites, **Milton’s Corridor of Opportunities** concludes that the addition of at least one Toronto-Milton mid-day round-trip frequency and others in the evening are deliverable relatively quickly and at low cost. So, too, is limited two-way weekend service.

These enhancements have recently been implemented on GO’s Kitchener Line, which has more pressing track capacity issues on its CN Bramalea-Georgetown Halton Subdivision route segment than CP’s Galt Subdivision used by GO’s Milton Line.



https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/energy/energy_fact/spotlight-transportation-2000_2019.png

The report's conclusions were reached through consultation with numerous current and retired passenger, freight and rail traffic control professionals in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, some associated with CP. The similar UP West Line, operated for Chicago's Metra by the Union Pacific Railroad, served as a working model to test various Milton Line service expansion possibilities.

An un-asked question, which the report raises and answers, is: "Why HPR commuter service?" Because it has a greater likelihood of providing multiple benefits faster, at a more reasonable cost and with a greater track record elsewhere in shifting travelers to sustainable transport than do other options under circumstances comparable to those on the Milton Line.

In cosmopolitan regions around the world – including an increasing number in the U.S. with which Milton and the entire GTHA compete – the adoption of incrementally-improved rail service as a fast, cost-effective solution to economic, social and environmental challenges rooted in poor transportation decisions and investments of the past is impressive.

HPR commuter service is a growth industry throughout the industrialized world, but not so far in Canada – or on GO's Milton Line.

The responsible parties, for a variety of poor and highly-politicized reasons, have ignored the untapped potential of HPR commuter service. This failure to embrace a proven, affordable and reliable mode of public travel for the GTHA – and other Canadian metropolitan regions – is harming this region, the province and the nation, both directly and in hidden ways.

As a next step beyond the addition of limited but significant off-peak service, ***Milton's Corridor of Opportunities*** proposes service extension to a new Milton West Station (with ample parking facilities) further west along CP's double-track Galt Subdivision. The most practical location is on the north side of the CP line at Tremaine Road, which is slated to receive a direct connection to Highway 401 in the future under current Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) plans.

Station additions on the Milton Line are included in various Metrolinx plans that have stalled due to the agency focusing on a proposed, un-engineered, \$12.5-billion Ontario Line automated rapid transit plan for Toronto, which has also delayed its flawed GO Regional Express Rail plan.

Off-peak service, a new Milton West Station and more peak-hour commuter trains that can be added through a rolling program of phased track capacity increases on the CP line should be the first steps. The original GO plans from the early 1990s need to be dusted off and revised to reflect current conditions, including positive changes in CP's freight operation. However, this alone will not be enough.

Poor transportation decisions and investments of the last two decades have put the GTHA at an economic, social and environmental disadvantage vis-à-vis other competitive regions across North America and around the world. Metrolinx has become a brake to progress.

As established at the **New Directions** “blue sky vision” expert transportation round-table session conducted by the author on behalf of Premier Michael Harris’ government in 2002, there never was a need for a Metrolinx “super agency” (**Appendix E**). It is an awkward and expensive layer of bureaucracy that has been slathered on top of GO, the GTHA’s many disjointed and largely uncoordinated local transit agencies, and the MTO.

To provide relief on the Milton line and throughout GO’s service territory, the report advocates the adoption of the locally-driven California joint powers authority (JPA) governance model, as explained in the context of intercity rail service in On Track Strategies’ Oxford County concept plan, **SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Transportation for Southwestern Ontario**.

http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Portals/15/Documents/SpeakUpOxford/2018/SouthwestLynx/SouthwestLynx_20180627_e_version.pdf

In conclusion, **Milton’s Corridor of Opportunities** recommends that research and lobbying activities be undertaken cooperatively by local federal, provincial and municipal politicians, community business leaders, public service groups and concerned Milton residents.

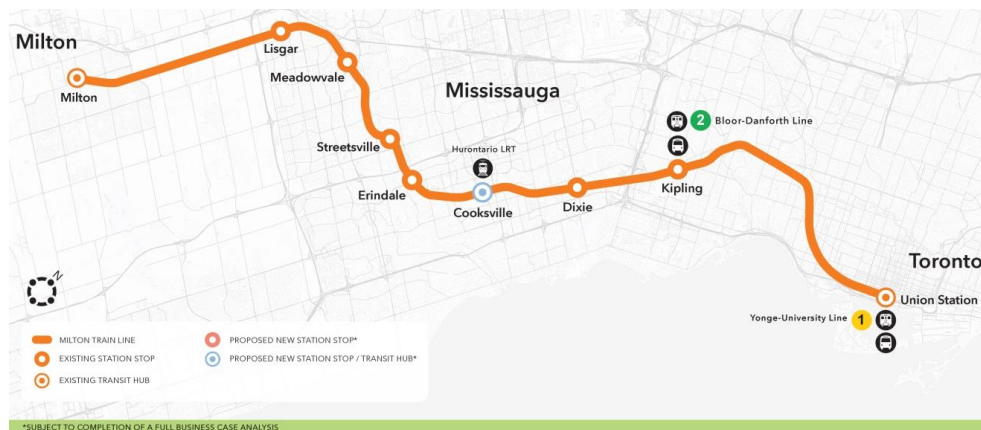
The first step should be the formation of a Halton regional advisory group, which can serve as a foundation for a new, locally-directed joint powers authority at the earliest opportunity.

Getting on with the long-promised improvement and expansion of commuter rail service on the Milton Line and throughout the GTHA is long overdue. If acted upon with alacrity, the solutions offered in response to the questions posed by MP Raitt and Councillor Challinor can serve as a new direction in correcting this politically- and bureaucratically-influenced policy of non-action.

The time for such action on the Milton Line is now. Delaying will only further jeopardize the economic, social and environmental competitiveness and vibrancy of Milton and Halton.

Carpe diem!

Milton’s Weekday-Only Rush-Hour Commuter Rail Service in 2019



Appendix A

(Metrolinx Website Copy: Milton GO Expansion)

Moving the heartland with more GO service

Halton puts the golden in Greater Golden Horseshoe. The area is a compass of natural beauty – to the south, 25 kilometres of stunning Lake Ontario waterfront, and to the north, the majesty and grandeur of the Niagara Escarpment. Whether you’re a young family or a busy executive, there are few better places to live. In fact, Burlington and Oakville have been ranked as some of the best places to live in Canada. Halton’s status as a great place to live will depend on transit in the coming years.

So, at Metrolinx, we’re building like never before. GO Expansion on the [Lakeshore West](#) and [Kitchener Line](#) means trains running all day in both directions, available to you when you need them. Plus more connections and upgraded stations, for travelers on the [Milton line](#).

There’s a lot for Haltonians to love – take a look at what’s being built for you.



- **93% projected population growth by 2041**
- **#1 and #2 best medium-sized cities to live in**
- **Trains running up to every 15 minutes**

Options

With more connections and upgraded stations, travelers on the Milton line have a convenient and enjoyable reason to make GO their first and favourite choice for week-day travel.

- **30% more trips**
- **15 minute rush hour service**
- **3 transit hub connections**

We've made some important improvements since 2016 to make your rush hour commute easier and more convenient. These include:



1 new train



2 new trips



3,000 more seats

All proposed new station stops are subject to completion of a full business case analysis.

Projects

- [Update II: Milton Rail Corridor Second Track Reinstatement](#)
- [Kipling Mobility Hub Study](#)
- [Kipling GO Station](#)
- [Update: Milton Rail Corridor Second Track Reinstatement](#)
- [Streetsville GO Station Parking Expansion](#)
- [Milton Rail Corridor Second Track Reinstatement](#)
- [Project Construction Updates](#)

<http://www.metrolinx.com/en/greaterregion/projects/Default.aspx>
<http://www.metrolinx.com/en/greaterregion/projects/milton-go-expansion.aspx>

Appendix B

ON TRACK STRATEGIES

OSHAWA, ONTARIO – STUDIO CITY, CALIFORNIA

SUBJECT: Urgent Provincial Transportation Issues
TO: Ontario Minister of Finance Vic Fedeli
FROM: Greg Gormick
DATE: November 19, 2018

The previous Liberal government committed Ontario to a series of gold-plated transportation mega-projects that taxpayers couldn't afford and which had not the slightest prospect of significantly improving mobility and access within reasonable budgets and timeframes.

Many of the Liberal appointees responsible for this vast chimera are still in positions of power and are attempting to accelerate these mega-projects. This is but an attempt to commit the current government before the realization comes that these projects are ill advised and there are superior, quicker and lower-cost options.

Of special concern is Metrolinx's acceleration of the bidding on the contract for the GO Regional Express Rail program, which is conservatively estimated at \$13.5 billion and excludes numerous large-scale projects to be handled under a non-alternative financing approach. This project should be halted pending peer reviews and audits by independent transportation professionals. Once committed, these projects will be virtually impossible to halt.

Metrolinx has, with the previous government's encouragement and protection, created an empire that has engaged in matters that are none of its concern, such as local and regional land use planning. It has profoundly failed to deliver meaningful transportation improvements across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Of special concern is that many of the Metrolinx projects don't have reasonable cost, project delivery and cost-benefits estimates. The key failure is a lack of a comprehensive plan with realistic and verifiable budget estimates and critical path management delivery schedules.

Excessive spending and out-of-control planning is still affecting Ontario's ability and the willingness of the responsible parties to examine lower-cost transportation improvements to quickly and affordably deliver substantial mobility benefits in the GTHA and beyond.

A prime example of such an option is the Northeast Lynx high-performance rail plan, which I am preparing for the All Aboard Northern Ontario citizens' rail action committee. Meetings with former Minister of Transportation John Yakabuski's staff regarding this and related investment matters produced only mild interest and unfulfilled promises of further meetings.

Attached is a tabulation of recent, current and proposed provincial capital spending on various transportation projects versus the full build-out cost of the Northeast Lynx plan to restore the Ontario Northland Railway's Toronto-North Bay-Cochrane passenger service, which was cancelled arbitrarily by the previous Liberal government in 2012. The figures involved are alarming, although not so for the cost-effective Northeast Lynx solution.

It is recommended that no commitment be made to any new Metrolinx capital spending pending independent and unbiased peer review and cost-benefits analysis of all the scattered projects for which the agency is now seeking this government's approval.

A meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss this and other urgent transportation funding matters, including the rollout of the Northeast Lynx plan, is also requested.

One of my serious concerns is GO Transit's safety culture, which the previous government allowed to devolve to a dangerous degree. It is the opinion of several highly-experienced rail professionals with whom I work that this will lead to a major accident, which would unfairly implicate the current government.

I feel a strong need to outline this serious situation to you confidentially and provide some practical and expedient solutions.

Greg Gormick
On Track Strategies
Oshawa, Ontario

Cc: Councillor John Challinor, Town of Milton

Northeast Lynx Capital Cost Comparison

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>COST</u> <u>(BILLIONS)</u>
Southwestern Ontario High-Speed Rail	\$21.0
GO Regional Express Rail Project	\$13.5
TTC Relief Line Subway	\$ 8.3
Toronto SmartTrack (2014 budget estimate only)	\$ 8.0
Gordie Howe Bridge (estimate including Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway)	\$ 7.1
GTA West Highway (excluding land expropriation)	\$ 6.0
TTC Richmond Hill Subway Extension	\$ 6.0
Gordie Howe Bridge (excluding highway expansion costs)	\$ 5.7
TTC Eglinton Crosstown LRT	\$ 5.3
TTC B-D Subway Scarborough Extension (three-station option)	\$ 4.6
TTC Sheppard Subway East Extension	\$ 3.6
TTC B-D Subway Scarborough Extension (one-station option)	\$ 3.5
GO Kitchener Line Expansion	\$ 2.3
Ottawa Confederation Line LRT Phase I	\$ 2.1
Highway 69/400 Four-Lane Expansion (188 miles)	\$ 1.7
Toronto SmartTrack (6 station projects only)	\$ 1.5
Union Pearson Express (GO Weston Subdivision fourth main track)	\$ 1.5
Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway	\$ 1.4
Mississauga Hurontario LRT	\$ 1.4
Presto Fare Card System	\$ 1.2
Highway 407 Eastern Extension Phase II	\$ 1.2
Highway 407 Eastern Extension Phase I	\$ 1.0
Toronto Union Station Revitalization Phase I	\$ 0.9
GO Whitby Rail Maintenance Centre	\$ 0.9
Toronto Union Station Rail Corridor Upgrading	\$ 0.7
TTC Yonge Subway Automatic Train Control	\$ 0.6
GO Bowmanville Rail Extension (approved budget to date only)	\$ 0.5*
Union Pearson Express (initial operating segment only)	\$ 0.5
Highway 401 Western Capacity Expansion (11 miles)	\$ 0.4
Northeast Lynx Phases I – III + Polar Bear Express Renewal (at full build-out)	\$ 0.1

* Metrolinx 2018 Statement: “Work is being done to refine infrastructure scope, cost, and schedule.”

*Greg Gormick
On Track Strategies
Oshawa, ON, and Studio City, CA*

Last Revised: November 19, 2018

Appendix C

from: **REDACTED**
to: Greg Gormick <greg.gormick@gmail.com>
date: Dec 23, 2018, 3:13 PM
subject: RE: Proof that dinosaurs still roam Northern Ontario

I will tell you where we stand within the ONR.

I am not a proponent (and this coming from [someone] who loves passenger trains). A train between Toronto and North Bay might get decent ridership if it runs daily, at the right times of the day, and if transit time could consistently remain below 5 hours. Not having control of any of the line south of North Bay makes me very wary (reference your email on the Canadian today).

As a taxpayer, I don't believe the population density north of North Bay is enough to justify the costs of a train. We could easily feed passengers by bus to a train in North Bay at a fraction of the cost. The efforts and daily distractions involved in running passenger trains are considerable ... **REDACTED**

So internally, I advise my colleagues to be careful what you wish for. When asked, I try to make sure everyone knows what is involved so at least they can take an educated position. If we are given the mandate to re-establish a passenger train, of course I would do my best to do a decent job of it.

Corina, obviously, is not as intimately familiar with what is involved, and rightly and admirably wants to grow the company and ensure that ONR is contributing to the development and sustainability of the north. However, she is also not a full-on proponent, just more so than I am. I think I've perhaps influenced her to take a more neutral position.

So we really are just laying low and letting the government decide. If we are asked for information from the Ministry, we provide it.

The fact that Corina has met with some of the other groups doesn't mean she necessarily supports them.

As you have found out, the Northlander always was and remains one of those political minefields that never dies. Vic will ultimately find this out, if he isn't catching on already.

I've given you the benefit of my perspective and our internal thoughts. Please keep these to yourself.

NAME AND TITLE REDACTED

Appendix D

*This is
High-Performance Rail*



*The fast, frequent and affordable
rail solution for
Canada*

What is High-Performance Rail?

High-performance rail (HPR) is a proven middle ground between VIA Rail's current service, which largely operates on tracks it shares with freight trains, and high-speed rail (HSR), which operates on all-new electrified lines that must be built from scratch at a very high cost.

HPR incrementally improves all aspects of the existing conventional rail service and builds on the public funds that have already been invested in it. Operating at progressively higher speeds with modern cars and locomotives, HPR offers:

- Increased frequency
- Reduced door-to-door travel times
- Enhanced comfort and onboard amenities
- Better on-time performance and all-weather reliability
- Improved, fully-accessible stations
- More and better connections to local transit

A major advantage of HPR is that it isn't a "big bang" approach that takes years to deliver any benefits before the entire project is completed, as is the case with HSR. It delivers service improvements at each step along a phased pathway to full and greatly expanded service.

HPR is often called a practical and affordable "higher speed" option for today, which can lead the way to more expensive and lengthy HSR construction in the future.

Where is HPR working now?

HPR is already at work on many rail corridors around the world and more are being developed. On some, HPR's success has led to the construction of all-new HSR lines and its continuation as an important connector for the cities bypassed by the HSR trains.

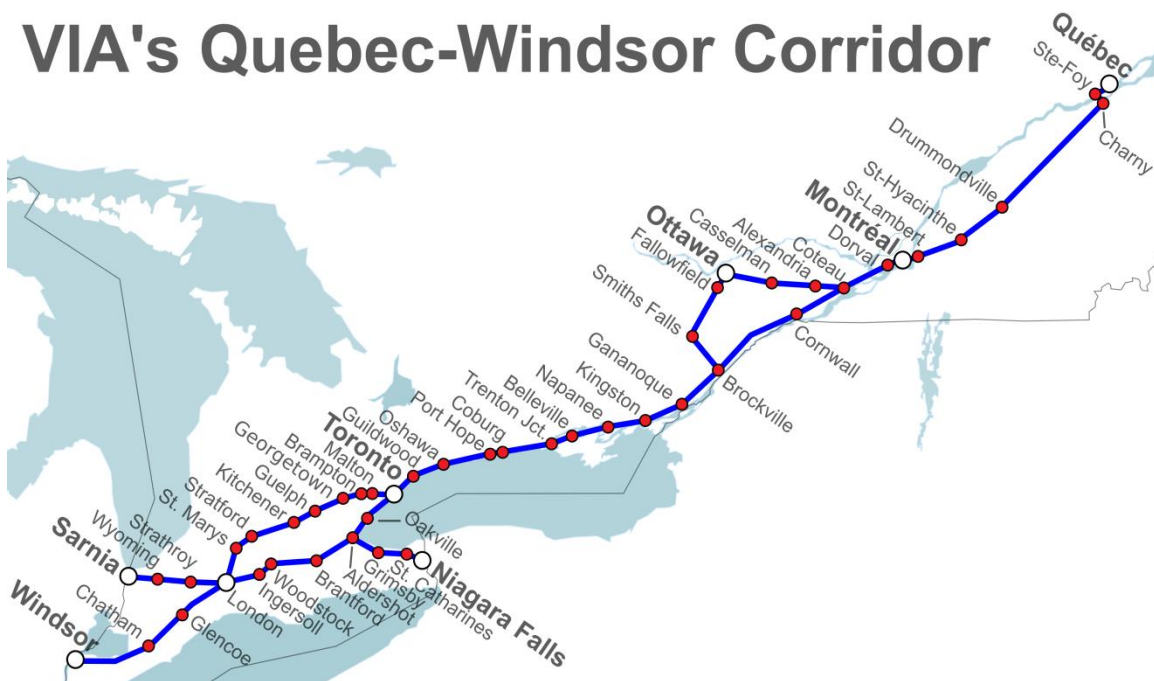
In the U.S., HPR is now at work on six Amtrak corridors in the Northeast, the Midwest and California. Eight more are being upgraded to HPR standards and several more are planned.

Where would HPR succeed in Canada?

HPR is ideal for VIA's Quebec-Windsor Corridor, which serves Canada's economic heart. It would be an attractive alternative to driving or flying for the 18 million Canadians who call this mega-region home. More than three million travelers already travel by train in the Quebec-Windsor Corridor annually. Based on the experience of other countries, HPR could be expected to more than double that ridership within a decade.

Eventually, HPR could be applied to other Canadian corridors, such as Calgary-Edmonton and Halifax-Moncton-Saint John. It could also connect with the HPR projects under way or planned for the U.S. border regions.

VIA's Quebec-Windsor Corridor



How much would HPR cost?

It could start with a \$3-billion investment that would provide much faster and more frequent service than VIA can now deliver. This initial investment would completely replace VIA's antiquated fleet with modern trains capable of operating at up to 200 km/hour. It would also upgrade the tracks, improve the signal systems and eliminate many dangerous grade crossings. The result would be more travellers, higher revenues, lower costs and improved public safety.

A second \$3-billion wave of HPR improvements would build on the first to cut the journey times further, boost train frequency and attract even more travellers.

How convenient would HPR really be?

Very! It would deliver attractive travel times and daily departure choices like these:

ROUTE	ROUNDTrips	TRAVEL TIME
Quebec-Montreal	10	2:30
Montreal-Ottawa	15	1:45
Montreal-Toronto	15	3:45
Ottawa-Toronto	15	3:15
Toronto-Brantford-London	10	1:50
Toronto-Stratford-London	10	2:10
Toronto-Windsor	6	3:30
Toronto-Detroit	6	3:50
Toronto-Sarnia	4	2:45
Toronto-Niagara Falls	10	1:45

Are HPR trains available for Canada?

There are several HPR equipment options for Canada. Diesel-powered HPR trains are now in use in the U.S. and others will soon to be running on other routes across America. Most are based on trains that have performed admirably on a wide variety of European routes.



Based on highly successful locomotives and rolling stock in service in Europe, the single-level Siemens Brightline trains have been built in California for the Miami-West Palm Beach-Orlando HPR service that began operation in late 2017.



HPR bi-level, push-pull equipment is currently used on three busy Amtrak California routes. They are among the most popular and cost-effective services in the entire U.S. rail network. New trains identical to those in use on the Florida HPR operation and now under construction, with substantial local economic spinoff, in Sacramento.



Spanish-designed, American-built Talgo HPR trains operate on the Amtrak Cascades route that links Vancouver, Seattle, Portland and Eugene, Oregon. The Talgos are low-slung, passive-tilt trains that “lean” into curves to provide for higher speeds and shorter running times with full passenger comfort.



Self-propelled, diesel multiple unit trains have a role to play in HPR systems, particularly on important lighter-density routes that act as feeders to the heavily-travelled main trunk lines. These Swiss-designed Stadler FLIRT cars are now in use on the new Dallas-Forth Worth TEX Rail service and more are now being built – diesel and electric – at its Utah manufacturing facility. Several other designs are now available for North American service.

Why should we invest in HPR?

First and foremost: to improve mobility. HPR would be the strong public transportation core of the Quebec-Windsor Corridor. It would be linked with major improvements to the transit services that would connect with it at multiple points. HPR would foster the development of a seamless, car-free travel system that would be the first choice of millions of travellers annually.

The economic benefits of HPR would also be large. Rail improvement projects have been proven to generate three to four times their investment cost in economic spin-off and job creation. As well, HPR would save taxpayers the expense of putting more of their money into the congested highway and air systems in the corridor – if they could even be expanded.

HPR would offer multiple energy and environmental benefits, especially when compared with car and air travel. It would be a potent force in dealing with climate change.

HPR would also boost our competitiveness with those regions around the world that have built or are building it. Experience has proved that the greater a region's mobility, the greater its attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest. The fact that more and more young people prefer public transportation to driving is a big selling point in HPR's favour.

So, can Canada afford to build HPR? The real question is whether we can afford not to.

High-Performance Rail: Canada's 21st Century Travel Option



Amtrak California photo © by Jeremiah Nueve

ON TRACK STRATEGIES

OSHAWA, ONTARIO – STUDIO CITY, CALIFORNIA

<http://railpast.com/CRN/On Track/ontrack.htm>

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The Only Thing Standing in the Way of All-Day Milton GO Train Service: Politics



Expanding the GO Milton Line by building more track on the existing right-of-way is the fastest and most cost-effective way to deliver the service Milton needs now. Photo © by and courtesy of Stephen C. Host

Since the day it was launched in 1981, the way to provide all-day, two-way service every day on GO's Milton Line has been known: more tracks and more trains.

Numerous studies by GO and the line's owner, Canadian Pacific (CP), have shown what is required to boost service on a route that will generate massive economic, social and environmental benefits comparable to those already found on GO's continuously-improved Lakeshore Line. The answer remains simple: More tracks to handle more trains to carry many more passengers throughout the day, every day of the week.

Instead of following the advice in a long list of taxpayer-funded studies, Queen's Park has embraced a new "solution" that has actually become a roadblock. Called the Missing Link, this scheme would build a new line for CN from Bramalea to where its current north-south freight line passes over the CP east-west line south of Bronte Street and Steeles Avenue in Milton.

This scheme would allegedly divert all the CN freight trains from the busy Bramalea-Georgetown section of its own line, which is used by GO's Kitchener Line trains. It would also take all of CP's freight trains off its line through Milton, supposedly allowing for more GO trains on both routes.

While Queen's Park says this would divert all the CP freight trains off the Milton-North Toronto-Scarborough line and allow for more GO Milton trains, it won't. What hasn't been revealed is that most of the promised benefits in the Missing Link are now missing in action.

Shockingly, this unworkable proposal was accepted and endorsed by Milton and other local councils without any independent analysis. Milton's review may be found online at:

<https://www.milton.ca/MeetingDocuments/Council/agendas2015/rpts2015/ENG-020-15%20The%20Missing%20Link%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Originally pegged at a cost of \$5.3 billion in 2015, the Missing Link has already grown to at least \$8 billion and it will require eight years or more to construct. Furthermore, the tough terms that were set by CN led CP to opt out because it would actually harm their freight operation. Therefore, the promised track capacity the Missing Link was going to free up on the CP line for more GO Milton trains won't be freed up at all.

The answer to this classic example of political foot dragging is what CP and the highly-qualified GO management teams of the past proposed: Build two more tracks on the existing right-of-way all the way from West Toronto to Milton. This option was quickly discarded in the Missing Link study that has now become the provincial government's gospel. The cost of the Milton Line track expansion project in 2015 was estimated to be \$3.5 billion. Doing the same on the GO Kitchener Line to increase that service was \$1.5 billion. In total, this would be \$5.0 billion.

To put this in perspective, adding two tracks to the GO Milton Line would be \$1.3 billion less than the cost of the proposed Gordie Howe Bridge at Windsor (not including the connecting highways) and roughly the same as Toronto's proposed one-stop subway in Scarborough.

Furthermore, adding the two new tracks alongside the two existing ones to provide the all-day GO service to Milton is the only way to also extend some of the trains to Campbellville and Cambridge. Without the expanded capacity between West Toronto and Milton, and additional infrastructure investment west to Cambridge, this service cannot be launched.

As for more GO trains, they're on the way. At a pre-election photo-op event in Burlington on April 30, the Kathleen Wynne and Justin Trudeau governments announced the purchase of 53 additional GO bi-level coaches. More can be easily ordered and built here in Ontario at Thunder Bay for the overdue and urgently-need GO Milton service.

This political game of offering up more studies, alternate plans and nothing but empty promises needs to be stopped dead in its tracks. GO's Milton Line is second only to the Lakeshore Line in terms of ridership. It is bulging at the seams and it needs to be expanded. The way to do that is well known and nothing but politics is standing in the way.

Greg Gormick is a nationally-known rail consultant and public transportation policy advisor. His clients have included CP, CN, VIA, Metrolinx and elected members of four political parties, as well as numerous government agencies across Canada.

<https://johnchallinor.ca/the-only-thing-standing-in-the-way-of-all-day-milton-go-train-service-politics/>

CN's Proposed Milton Intermodal Terminal Wrong Yard, Wrong Place, Wrong Time



Industry experience demonstrates that many rail/truck intermodal terminals, such as the one CN's proposing for Milton, may start small, but they inevitably get much larger. CSX Transportation Photo

Rail-based intermodal freight is a modern, innovative and environmentally superior form of transportation – but not when it is used as a means to build a company's real estate profits at the expense of a community, its residents and their visionary official plan.

CN's proposed Milton terminal fits this category to a T, despite what the railway says publicly. While the community has been promised that this truck-to-rail terminal will only serve four Halifax-Chicago freight trains, this is just a foot in the door. Unstated is the fact that CN's Brampton Intermodal Terminal is a poorly designed and poorly located holdover from the 1970s that no longer fully meets its operating needs. On the other hand, it would yield a real estate bonanza if it could be replaced by a more efficient terminal elsewhere – such as Milton.

A question that must be asked is why CN has acquired 405 hectares for its Milton terminal when it says it only requires 162. That massive cushion of extra land could easily swallow all of the current Brampton intermodal operation, which sits on 81 hectares of valuable real estate that has rising redevelopment potential.

As well as violating the land use planning objectives of the Town of Milton and Halton Region, an intermodal terminal on the site CN has assembled will ultimately fail to even meet its own objectives, if it intends to be an efficient and shipper-responsive rail service provider.

From a railway operating perspective, the Milton site works reasonably well. The extra-long intermodal trains of today would smoothly enter and depart this yard, which is not the case at the current CN Brampton terminal. It is a cramped, stub-ended yard that cannot provide for easy train access or container loading and unloading. And it can't be expanded.

But CN's Milton site is badly flawed for another and more serious reason.

Ideally, new intermodal terminals must be built beyond the road congestion generated by the large urban regions they serve, allowing the trucks carrying the containers to move in and back out of the core as easily as possible. Putting a new terminal this close to the worst of the region's congestion on a frequently-gridlocked highway corridor is doomed to failure.

CN is avoiding the fact that it actually requires two intermodal terminals, one on either side of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. One should be built just east of Oshawa – which it has investigated – adjacent to the 401, close to the 407 and alongside CP's Toronto-Montreal main line, where it could be shared advantageously by the two railways.

CN's western terminal should be built farther west on its main line, close to the junction of the 401 and 403 near Woodstock, on land zoned for industrial use. This has been recommended in a soon-to-be-released report on improved rail service in Southwestern Ontario.

Also weighing against the proposed CN Milton terminal is its impact on local road congestion and costs. While it would be close to the 401 and 407, it will generate heavy truck traffic that will inflict substantial damage on the local roads leading to those main highways. The cost will come out of the citizens' taxes.

Furthermore, emissions and noise from these terminals have become major issues in many other locations. An intermodal terminal project in Los Angeles was rejected recently under the strict requirements the state and local public agencies are now applying to these operations. CN's plan falls far short of meeting these California environmental standards or those of various other public agencies across North America.

In short, CN has either not done its homework or is not telling Milton residents the real impacts of its proposed terminal and the alternatives available. A full and transparent environmental assessment addressing all these issues is an absolute necessity before it proceeds.

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<https://johnchallinor.ca/cns-milton-intermodal-terminal-the-wrong-yard-in-the-wrong-place-at-the-wrong-time/>

Milton Transit: Hobbled – But Not Hopeless



Increasing the frequency and effectiveness of Milton Transit, including more connections with expanded GO train and bus service, can only happen through a new, fairer and more innovative funding relationship with the federal and provincial governments. Photo © by and courtesy of James Bow

The three cardinal rules for success in public transportation are frequency, frequency and frequency! By those standards, Milton Transit fails the test – but not of its own doing.

Like most urban transit systems in Ontario and across Canada, Milton Transit's failure to reach its full potential is due to a lack of a consistent and equitable funding partnership with the federal and provincial governments. It is beyond the financial capacity of local governments – which don't have adequate access to the required public revenues – to meet the full needs of transit users. Even in the U.S., federal and state programs more equitably share tax revenue with local transit systems to acquire vehicles and maintain a state of good repair.

Like VIA Rail Canada's transcontinental passenger trains, Milton Transit and other systems are being overloaded by the multiple market segments they must try to serve with inadequate frequencies and the resources with which they have to work. Trying to play many roles, these public transport services are unable to serve many of them – let alone all of them – properly.

Today, Milton Transit is expected to provide a multi-route service that meets the needs of:

- local commuters travelling to and from their jobs via GO Transit's trains and buses;
- workers employed by local businesses;
- students of all ages, who are without drivers' licenses or access to personal vehicles;
- those with mobility challenges that make it difficult or impossible to drive; and
- residents and visitors travelling to and from a wide range of medical, shopping and leisure activities here and elsewhere in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

With its basic grid layout, Milton requires beefed up transit on the trunk routes that form this grid. More cost-effective methods need to be expanded to serve the lower-density residential and employment pockets off this grid. The Trans-Cab service is a step in the right direction, but it is still limited in coverage and hours of service. Other communities, such as Georgetown and Innisfil, have also taken steps in this direction by contracting with cab companies and Uber to provide these “first and last mile” services. More should be launched.

However, the biggest problem remains the scattershot transit planning and funding policies of the previous provincial government. Promises of far-off, gold-plated solutions were trotted out to provide political photo ops, but with little or no follow-up. When slight improvements were made to GO services and local transit funding arrangements, they were invariably inadequate to address the real problem, which is that transit frequency and coverage still lag behind many other jurisdictions in North America. This places Milton and other communities at a severe disadvantage in terms of attracting and retaining residents, businesses, investment and jobs.

Failing to improve Milton Transit and other systems leads to a competitive disadvantage. Joint federal/state/municipal transit funding and governance initiatives in places such as North Carolina, California and the Pacific Northwest are delivering easy and affordable car-free mobility that makes these attractive locales, especially to Millennials, who don’t want to car-dependent and have the competitive skills to choose where they want to live and work.

But Milton’s transit glass isn’t half-empty. It’s only half-full.

The current transit master plan is a good place to start on making Milton Transit a better and more innovative service at a justifiable cost. Doing more will produce pay back not just better performance, but a substantial boost in local economic activity and tax revenue.

What’s needed is a fast and thorough review of Milton’s transit plan, with citizen input, by experts who can refine it without being hobbled by the uninspired policies of the previous government. It should recognize the new provincial government’s view that the feds must participate in assured and consistent strategies to build communities that are socially, economically and environmentally attractive and globally competitive.

Improvements to Milton Transit can only occur through a concerted effort by all of Ontario’s transit agencies, industry and municipal associations, and the senior levels of government. Milton residents, councillors and staff can take the lead by rethinking their own master plan so it not only address Milton’s needs, but can serve as a model for other communities.

As said decades ago by Charles F. “Boss” Kettering, the chief technical visionary behind the success of General Motors: “A problem well stated is a problem half-solved.”

Greg Gormick is a nationally-known transportation consultant and policy advisor. His clients have included Metrolinx, the TTC, Canada’s major railways, international rail and transit equipment builders, and elected members of four political parties.

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