

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

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## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Metrolinx prepares to move on projects

No toll roads in new plan

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A proposed \$50 billion construction and expansion plan by Metrolinx to revamp regional and city transit around Toronto could begin to break ground next year, says the agency.

“We want to see shovels in the ground,” said Rob Maclsaac, chairman of Metrolinx. “Through the province’s MoveOntario 2020 commitments, we can start moving on many projects within the next year.”

Massive expansion of public transit is at the core of the Metrolinx draft strategy called The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. The plan sets out 100 necessary actions to build new transportation infrastructure and improve transit service.

“This is big,” said Maclsaac. “Transportation is the largest challenge facing our region — and this plan will be a major step forward.”

The plan includes constructing new rail, busways, streetcars and cycling amenities, including 1,150 kilometres of new rapid transit lines and aims to double the number of trips taken on transit every year.

When the plan is implemented over 25 years, 75 per cent of residents in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, compared with the current 42 per cent, will live within two kilometres of a dedicated transit line, Metrolinx states.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance (RCCAO) says the plan meets its previous recommendations that a comprehensive transportation plan for the region should be the top priority for Metrolinx. The plan’s overall regional connections are strong, but RCCAO finds the plan’s investment strategy a bit disappointing.

“We were hoping for more aggressive funding strategies,” says Andy Manahan, executive director of RCCAO. “We hoped the plan would be more of an advocate for different funding solutions and mechanisms. However, the plan itself is what we hoped to see.”

Metrolinx also released a draft investment strategy for the plan and it does not include road tolls or special taxes to pay for the transit improvements during the plan’s initial phases.

Maclsaac noted in a statement that enough money has already been committed for improvements to GO Transit, TTC, and regional services. The province’s MoveOntario2020 will support the plan’s large scale projects. After the MoveOntario 2020 phase is over, Metrolinx will report back to the province in 2013 with recommendations to address funding and fill the 2016 to 2030 funding gap.