

Open Letter Issued by the Bureau of Municipal Research, 32 Isabella Street, Toronto 5



CIVIC AFFAIRS

An independent fact-finding organization
reporting to the public on civic affairs.

October 18, 1955

PROPOSAL FOR TWO DIAGONAL SUBWAY ROUTES

Fellow Citizens:

Some months ago, your Bureau was invited by Toronto's Board of Control to comment on a proposal for two diagonal subway routes. Because the planning and financing of the Toronto Transit Commission's services, including future rapid transit facilities, merits the careful consideration of everyone residing within the Toronto metropolitan area, the Bureau's reply is reproduced here in the form of an open letter.

October 13, 1955

His Worship, Mayor Nathan Phillips, Q.C.
and Members of the Board of Control
City Hall
Toronto 1

Gentlemen:

On March 4, 1955, a Toronto resident, Mrs. Frederick Young, appeared before you to request consideration of her suggestion for two new rapid transit routes in the Toronto area. Instead of an east-west subway under or adjacent to Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue, Mrs. Young proposed rapid transit lines running diagonally from Queen and Yonge Streets to the vicinity of Weston Road and St. Clair Avenue on the northwest and O'Connor Drive and St. Clair Avenue on the northeast.

The proposal was referred for consideration and comment to a number of municipal officials and to several civic and independent agencies including the Bureau of Municipal Research.

Until further information becomes available, including engineers reports, the Bureau is not in a position to evaluate the merits of the suggested diagonal subways or, indeed, of the original plan for a straight east-west rapid transit route. Selection of the most suitable location for any future rapid transit line is a task which requires a detailed survey of all feasible alternatives combined with a careful weighing of the interests of those who may be affected. The Bureau of Municipal Research recommends that a comprehensive study of this sort be undertaken before a final decision

is reached. In carrying out such a survey, the Bureau suggests that the following points be given due consideration:

Planning

1. Municipalities have a responsibility to provide adequate facilities for the mass movement of people by public transit as well as by roads for the use of the private automobile.

2. Within the greater Toronto area, part of this latter responsibility is borne directly by the local municipalities and part is shared through the metropolitan federation. While the local municipalities have an obvious interest in the development of an effective public transit system, the primary responsibility for this service is lodged with the metropolitan municipality.

3. The Bureau would suggest that, in the determination of rapid transit routes at least, the adoption of an area-wide approach is essential.

4. The Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board is the appropriate body to give the subject this necessary overall consideration. The Board, it is understood, is already engaged in collecting data toward a public transportation plan for the metropolitan area.

5. In the Bureau's opinion, the main objective of the plan should be to develop the pattern of both traffic and transit movement so as to maximize the total traffic flow and the possible speed of movement. To this end, statistics on present traffic flow and population density are not, of course, conclusive. The selection of a particular subway route, for example, may lead to changes in the existing traffic pattern and to the development of new concentrations of population and traffic density brought about by residential, industrial or commercial construction.

6. Before its plan is completed, the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board might be expected also to obtain information or opinions concerning the location of future subway routes from the following:

- a) the traffic experts employed by the Toronto Transit Commission and the Roads Department of Metropolitan Toronto;
- b) the Metropolitan Assessment Commissioner who is in a good position, through his knowledge of property values, to advise on the economic strength of particular areas and on the probable effect of subway routings on land values;
- c) the Metropolitan Toronto Civil Defence Organization;
- d) local planning boards which, in turn, can secure necessary advice and help from local officials in both their municipal departments and their special purpose agencies;
- e) the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways concerning possible extension of present commuter train services as an alternative or supplement to rapid transit and also concerning the possible use of railway rights-of-way or adjacent lands for rapid transit lines;

- f) the Board of Trade, local business mens' associations, rate-payers' organizations and similar agencies which may have a direct interest in the location and construction of further rapid transit facilities.

Finance

1. Because public transit carries far more people in relation to the public facilities and space required than the private automobile, it is in the community's financial interest to foster the widest possible use of public transit services. Savings can be anticipated through (a) reductions in personal outlays on local travel, and (b) a lower combined expenditure on construction and maintenance of roads and transit thoroughfares in relation to their capacity.

2. Within the Toronto metropolitan area, an essential prerequisite to the desired individual preference for travel by transit is fast and comfortable service. It would seem also from the available evidence that public transportation services of this quality will only be secured through a considerable extension of well-conceived rapid transit routes - routes that can be tied in with a comprehensive network of ordinary surface lines. The objective should be to combine adequate coverage throughout the entire area for which the TTC is responsible with a structure of fares which is appropriate having regard to the particular service provided in return.

3. Construction of grade-separated transit lines, whether below ground or otherwise, is obviously highly expensive. The question which is now being asked is: "Should the TTC be expected to finance rapid transit developments solely through revenues from fares?" The transit commissioners think not and considerable public backing can be found for their stand.

4. Various groups have advocated two supplementary sources of funds - payments from the municipal treasury and grants-in-aid from the province. Both proposals should have careful consideration because they might well involve a fundamental change in the method of financing the whole scope of public transit operations.

Municipal Aid

1. At its September 8th meeting, the Metropolitan Council authorized a grant of \$2½ million to the TTC. Payment is conditional upon the passage of enabling legislation by the Province of Ontario. While the cost of financing the Yonge Street subway was brought in as a supporting argument, the memorandum approved such a payment "on account of the losses it (the TTC) suffered during the extension and reorganization of its system on a Metropolitan basis". The payment is intended to be non-recurring. Hence the problem of paying for new subway construction has yet to be resolved.

2. It is only fair to recall that some years ago the shoe was on the other foot. In 1943 and again in 1945 and 1946, the Toronto Transportation Commission gave voluntary aid to a city-wide programme of traffic improvements, contributing in total more than \$1 million to the City. The money came from the Commission's swollen wartime revenues.

3. The TTC is now expected to pay the equivalent of full municipal taxation on its off-street properties but it pays no taxes on its tracks, overhead wiring or other street installations. Unlike most similar utilities which operate under private ownership, the TTC pays no municipal franchise for its running rights.

4. The financial conditions under which the TTC undertakes its several types of service differ as follows:

- a) Bus Routes: The TTC pays nothing for its use of the streets. (Its purchases of gasoline are of course subject to the regular provincial tax.)
- b) Trolley Bus Routes: The TTC is responsible for only its own overhead wiring.
- c) Street Car Lines: The TTC pays for its trackage and overhead wiring and, in addition, must maintain the road surface between the tracks.
- d) The Subway: The TTC bought the land for the right-of-way, paid for the development of the roadbed and for laying its own tracks. It is responsible for full maintenance and for the equivalent of full municipal taxation on the developed right-of-way.

The position is most favourable to the TTC where buses are employed, less favourable where there are streetcars and by all odds the least favourable where rapid transit requires a costly private right-of-way, especially below ground.

5. So long as transfer privileges exist, it may not be considered practical to segregate the cost of operating individual transit lines. In any event, each separate line draws passengers from other lines and feeds passengers to them. The justification for municipal aid should therefore be considered only in relation to the total transit operation with special reference to the particular necessity for and cost of alternative types of services and to the overall service available to the whole community.

6. The purpose of a continuing municipal subsidy would be to avoid an impossible increase in fares. It would only be warranted in other words as a method of last resort to prevent a serious loss in passenger traffic and a resulting increase in the road requirements for private motor vehicles.

7. Before assuming any further responsibility to private fiscal aid, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto should look into the entire fare structure with the TTC, including transfer privileges, and come to an understanding on an equitable policy for the future for all the areas served by the Commission. Metro should satisfy itself that fares are providing maximum income consistent with full utilization of public transit services. Particularly if aid is to take the form of capital grants for rapid transit, the municipality should obtain and pass upon a blueprint setting out the long term plans for construction of such lines. Certainly if the whole community is required to contribute to the cost of transit services through taxes, particular areas should not enjoy a privileged position in terms of either service or fares.

Provincial Aid

1. It is not long since urban municipalities became eligible for provincial road subsidies on any significant scale. Payments now support approved construction and maintenance of all local roads except initial construction of local roads in new subdivisions.

2. Provincial highway expenditures, including grants to municipalities, used to be financed through receipts from the gasoline tax and motor vehicle revenues. Three years ago that system was terminated and such expenditures can now be increased at will.

3. The result of the above changes is to add two points to the arguments made for provincial grants towards construction and maintenance of rapid transit routes. Like motor roads, they provide for the movement of people, although they are not used for transportation of goods.

4. As long as no equivalent subsidy is available, local authorities have a financial inducement to build roads rather than rapid transit lines. In the circumstances, a review of the provincial policy seems warranted. Certainly any decision on the advisability of a combined rapid transit and expressway development is likely to be distorted by the present grant situation which would favour its construction over a single purpose line.

5. The introduction of provincial subsidies for rapid transit lines would involve the recognition of a different principle than that implicit in the road subsidies. In a province-wide transportation network, even local roads may have some significance to citizens living outside the particular municipality. Rapid transit routes, on the other hand, are almost exclusively for the use and convenience of local residents. If Metropolitan Toronto were to receive a transit subsidy, provincial taxpayers in other parts of Ontario would have reason to expect some form of grant-in-aid for their own local transit services.

Before the City presses for action on particular subway developments, it should in the Bureau's opinion look to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and its Transit Commission to resolve the problems of finance, including fares, and planning. Action along these lines seems to us to be essential if citizens of Toronto are to be protected in their commitments for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Signed: D. W. LANG

President

Signed: ERIC HARDY

Director