

Smog City or Transit City?

You Choose

We live in Smog City

1700 Torontonians die from smog every year.

Traffic congestion is getting worse.

Over the last 20 years transits share of all trips taken in Toronto has dropped by 10%.

We have the most expensive monthly passes of any large Canadian City.

TTC riders experience the worst crowding in the country.

The Province once paid more than half of transit costs. They now pay less than 1/3rd.

It's time to build a Transit City

We need real funding from the government of Ontario.

We must make transit affordable.

We need frequent reliable service.

We need a new Light Rail network across the whole City.

We need frequent all day two way GO transit service.

Elements of Great Transit System

1. High Quality Service

The TTC needs to provide more service on busy routes. A generation ago Queen streetcars came every 40 seconds during rush hour. Now it comes every 6 minutes.

Rush Hour Waiting Times
(in minute and seconds)

Route	1964	2005
Bathurst	2'00"	4'54"
Carlton	1'32	4'15"
Dundas	1'40"	6'00"
King	1'20"	4'00"
Queen	40"	6'00"
St. Clair	1'30"	3'15"

To compete with the car transit service on all routes needs to be frequent and reliable. Some buses in the TTC system only run once per hour. This is unacceptable. Every route must run at least once every 15 minutes. Frequent reliable service is the most important tool for attracting new riders.

2. Affordable Fares

High fares keep riders off transit. However, in the 1990's TTC fares doubled. Every time fares go up the TTC loses we lose millions of rides per year. The TTC needs to bring it's transit fares in line with other Canadian cities. The MetroPass costs \$98.75. The Montreal Monthly pass costs \$59.

3. A City-wide Network

Transit systems are like road networks. We need heavy rail based transit that function like highways, medium transit priority routes like the Spadina streetcar right of way, that work like arterial roads, and regular bus and streetcar routes for more local service. Two pieces of the network need dramatic improvement. Toronto's inner suburbs need a network of light rail service. GO Transit needs more frequent all day two way service to handle long trips and cut car dependence in the 905 region.

4. Reliable Funding

During the 1970's and 1980's the TTC received substantial and predictable funding from the Province of Ontario. This was the period that saw the greatest growth in transit ridership in Toronto's history. In the mid-1990's this funding arrangement was cancelled transit ridership has been effectively stalled ever since. In recent years the province has begun to put money back into the TTC, but at less than half the rate of the old agreement.

Transit City

Smart Starts

Ridership Growth Strategy

In 2001 TEA began campaigning for real improvements in fares and service levels. The result is the TTC's Ridership Growth Strategy. For the first time in decades the TTC has a plan that will actually give transit riders what they want. These good first-step measures are being slowly implemented, there have already been small improvements to over 40 routes, and the TTC has introduced a discounted weekly transit pass, but the plan is not being fully implemented because of a lack of funding.

Building a Transit City

In September of 2003 TEA began a campaign to get a better transit network within Toronto. As a result the TTC developed a plan Called Building a Transit City. The proposal is a 200 kilometer network of medium capacity transit service on important suburban streets like Don Mills, Eglinton, Finch, Sheppard, Kingston Road, Jane and others. This will cost money and take time but it is the most effective way to solve gridlock, sprawl and smog. The plan calls for either busways or light rail. The City is currently undertaking planning and feasibility studies

Light rail is essentially a streetcar running in its own protected lane. It's the fastest growing approach to transit in North America and Europe. It's the best hop for medium capacity transit in Toronto.

Advantages over Toronto's streetcar system:

- Faster, larger and lighter vehicles improve capacity, and speed,
- Improved track design makes for smoother quieter rides
- Less obtrusive overhead wiring makes it more attractive
- It can use traffic signal priority to reduce waiting times

Advantages over subway

- It can carry almost as many people as a subway
- Costs 1/10th as much to build

Advantages over buses

- 90% less air pollution
- 90% less greenhouse gases
- Quieter and smoother operation

The Right Priorities

The Ridership Growth Strategy and Building a Transit City are the right priorities for Toronto. They are cost effective and designed to meet the needs of transit riders. However, the Provincial and federal governments has begun tying their funding for transit to other projects. They have required the City to invest in environmental studies for a subway extension to York University, new “smart-card” fare collection systems, and better integration of transit with other Greater Toronto Area transit systems. These projects do have some merit but they aren’t as important as getting better service.

Toronto has a strong reason to believe in subways. The Yonge and Bloor Subways have been huge successes. But, subways are not the right answer for every transit route. They are best suited for medium distances trips in areas with exceptionally high ridership. We ignored this principle when we built the \$1 billion Sheppard Subway. Most streetcar lines and some bus routes carry more passenger than this subway. The prospects for proposed subway extensions (such as York University) are no better.

Smart Cards will cost the TTC approximately \$120 million dollars on new equipment without improving the frequency of service. We could buy 250 buses for the same amount and improve service dramatically. The province is also considering setting up a GTA wide transit authority. This could result in transit funds being diverted from Toronto to the outlying areas. Given that the TTC carries over 80% of all transit riders in the GTA this proposal is unfair. We don’t need new decision making bodies we need more funding overall.

Take Action

What TEA has done

TEA founded the Rocket Riders in 1998. This group has been a voice for transit riders in Toronto

In 1998, 2000, 2001 we defeated proposed fare increases.

In 2002 we produced a report “Transit’s Lost Decade”. We found a 10% decline in the frequency of bus service and a 15% decrease in streetcar service. We showed that fares doubled in a decade.

In 2003 we advocated for a service based transit improvement plan. In response TTC developed the Ridership Growth Strategy

In 2004 we campaigned for and achieved the implementation of service improvements on 40 routes.

In 2004 we campaigned to get more federal and provincial funding for transit along with the labour council under the banner of Public Transit for the Public Good.

In 2004 we worked with the local community to get a Streetcar-only lane on St.Clair.

In 2005 we got the TTC to endorse the Building a Transit City report

What you can do

Call or write your MPP and tell them you want the province to increase its share of transit funding. Also tell them that the Ridership Growth and Transit City plans must come first. Their contact information can be found at:

<http://olaap.ontla.on.ca/mpp/daCurMbr.do?locale=en>

Join TEA’s Rocket Rider caucus. Send an email to rocketriders@yahoo.com to get details on our monthly meetings. Or phone TEA at 416 596-0660

Call your City Councilor and tell them to accelerate the implementation of the Ridership Growth Strategy and Building a Transit City. If you don’t know who your city councilor is you can find out at: <http://app.toronto.ca/wards/jsp/wards.jsp>

TEA’s transit page has an exhaustive list of transit articles, reports, and organizations. <http://www.torontoenvironment.org/transit>

