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October 30, 2014

Mr. Bruce McCuaig
President and CEO
Metrolinx
97 Front Street West,
Toronto, ON M5J 1E6

Dear Mr. McCuaig:

Subject: Parking Capacity Problems at Unionville GO Station – Need for Short Term Actions

We are writing to express our concern regarding the parking problems currently being experienced at the Unionville GO Station. We feel that GO Transit needs to implement near-term improvements to address the parking concern in a timely manner.

GO Transit's service expansion in Markham and Unionville is clearly a key pillar in the desired transformation from car-oriented to mass transit-oriented commuting in our community. However, this progress is threatened by the alarming lack of parking at Unionville GO Station. The 1600-space parking lot, expanded just a few years ago, is now routinely filled beyond capacity. Transit patrons are now parking along access roads and in the adjacent private parking lots. Winter plowing and snow storage operations will exacerbate this situation in just a few weeks. These problems contribute to frustration and safety concerns, and threaten to undermine the impressive move towards transit-oriented commuting. Major local developments coming on line, as well as potential significant train service improvements (track twinning per EA, provincial RER plan), will further stress the tolerance of commuters in our area.

While GO Transit's plan for an 800+ unit parking structure at this station is envisioned for the medium-term (per GO's plan released 2013), we are realistic to understand that this possible solution will not be implemented for some time. There are also on-going mobility hub studies lead by the City that may lead to parking changes in the long-term.

We are aware that Metrolinx cooperates with YRT/VIVA on GO shuttle buses and co-fares. However, additional strategies to deal with current overcrowding are needed now. We respectfully offer several strategies that we feel would, in part, mitigate the current parking situation at the Unionville GO Station, including:

- Changing snow management techniques, so that parking spaces are not lost due to snow storage
- Creating a new surface parking lot on west side of the tracks with an access road off Enterprise Drive and a pedestrian crossing over the tracks or a platform on the west side
- Use of remote parking lots plus shuttle buses
- Adding additional GO shuttles or Dial-A-Rides (not all trains have connecting shuttle service today)

- Increased transit service in area bounded by Kennedy, McCowan, Major Mac and 407 (recommended in 2013 report)
- Replacing bike lanes on Ravis Rd. and YMCA Blvd. with boulevard Multi Use Pathways (pedestrian/cyclist) or physically separated cycle tracks to increase cyclists perception of safety, thereby increasing usage
- Charging a nominal price for parking, with the amount deducted from train/bus ticket.

Further, we feel it prudent that GO Transit develop a threshold plan, where capacity and usage are continuously tracked and mitigation steps are taken well ahead of needed parking capacity improvements.

It is recognized that several of these strategies may require engagement of, and/or partnership with, other agencies (Viva, YRT, City, etc.) and the local community. The Unionville Ratepayers Association, one of Markham's largest and most active resident associations, has successfully served as a community engagement partner and key contributor on many major public initiatives during the past two decades. The URA is a progressive association that fully understands the importance of public transit in meeting GTHA mobility needs. We would be pleased to work with you to implement these or other critically-needed interim actions.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Miasek

Peter Miasek
President

cc.

Jack Collins – Chief Capital Officer, Metrolinx

Greg Percy – President, GO Transit

Mayor Frank Scarpitti

Deputy Mayor Jack Heath

Councillor Don Hamilton – Ward 3

Alan Brown - Director, Engineering, Markham

Anne-Marie Carroll –General Manager (Acting), YRT (c/o renata.fabbro@york.ca)