

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario

RCCAO welcomes Ontario government plan to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit

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The planned consolidation of Metrolinx and GO Transit by the province will result in infrastructure projects starting faster for construction firms to work on, says one construction association.

“This move shows that the province wants a faster start on construction projects through its Move Ontario plan and getting shovels in the ground overall,” said Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

Jim Bradley, Ontario transportation minister, says the new Metrolinx will help get transit infrastructure project decisions and work done quicker, ease congestion and create thousands of jobs. Robert Prichard has been named transition advisor for the merger and the transition advisory board includes Metrolinx Chair Rob MacIsaac and GO Transit Chair Peter Smith.

Bradley unveiled the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act 2009 earlier this week for Queen’s Park consideration.

The Ontario government will appoint up to 15 members on the new board that will include planning, finance and development experts. The legislation could be passed as early as late spring.

“The benefit to this as well is, if they get a fast start, they can possibly use some of the announced federal stimulus funding from Ottawa,” adds Manahan.

A key objective of legislation is to provide the new Metrolinx with the necessary tools to quickly implement the recently unveiled regional transportation plan called The Big Move. Without any political figures on the board quicker decisions could result thanks to the lack of turf wars and voter appeasement that goes with politics, state various transit and municipal experts.

In RCCAO’s independently-commissioned report, Transportation Challenges, by Richard Soberman, it found that Metrolinx needed more funding leverage and effective governance to implement regional transit infrastructure planning. Manahan says the new Metrolinx “can be viewed as an evolution” in the effectiveness of the provincial agency.

The Big Move is a \$50-billion, 25-year plan for improving transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.

A component of this was a \$7-billion, five-year capital plan projected to deliver an estimated \$33.9 billion in business revenue impact on construction, engineering and transit and \$20.9 billion of “indirect impacts” for companies that supply goods and services.

In December 2008 Metrolinx recommended construction funding for the Sheppard East LRT and York

Region's VIVA system to launch the regional plan. The agency also approved a list of 15 top transit priorities for its five-year capital plan.

There are more than 1.6 million transit trips a day in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas and GO Transit carries nearly 55 million passengers each year. The province estimated that congestion costs the Greater Toronto Area alone an estimated \$6 billion annually.