

Transport Futures conference to focus on P3s

By [Lindsey Cole](#) - Apr 13, 2015

This year's Transport Futures conference is taking a slightly different turn, states its founder Martin Collier, delving into the realm of public-private partnerships (P3s).



The event intends to "drill down" on the subject, taking a look at all the policy and implementation issues, which is particularly topical given the ongoing discussions with government on deficits, transit infrastructure and revenue tools, Collier explains.

"There's never been a conference that I am aware of that's looked at both roads and transit in terms of P3s," he says.

"So that's what we're going to do. Now is the time to look at it."

Also known as alternative finance and procurement, P3s tend to receive both positive and negative attention.

"For large or complex projects, P3s can provide better value than delivery using traditional procurement methods," explains a release on the conference.

"But whether we're building, improving or maintaining roads, bridges and transit, not everyone agrees that this is necessarily the best way forward."

Thus, Transport Futures decided to stage the P3s in Motion Conference on May 4 in Toronto, states Collier.

"I think the biggest thing is there's still this mistrust. I'm not sure if its mistrust of business or mistrust of government or mistrust of both maybe," he says.

"Yet at the same time...in terms of the general public there's no NGO, there's no body sort of saying 'hey, look at this differently.' Talk about the issues, what we've learned. Where are there gaps? What has been done wrong, what has been done right? As I've been putting this together I've realized that Ontario is actually considered one of the leaders on P3s in the world. We've come a long way."

Sponsored by the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario** and presented by Healthy Transport Consulting, the conference will feature experts, researchers, academics and politicians who will be giving presentations and taking part in panel discussions.

"The regulatory, commercial and consultation content to be covered will include partnerships, legislation, performance, asset transfer, risk allocation, financing terms, environmental approvals, monitoring, politics, public engagement and more," adds the release.

Collier says all angles will be examined.

"Some (speakers) are academic, they're researchers. They look at things in a very balanced way," he adds.

"There's a lot of perspectives and we're trying to bring them all in."

Some of the questions Transport Futures aims to answer through the conference include: Should P3s always be considered for building public transit and road infrastructure? Are governments choosing the correct projects and the right partners to build them? How much risk is actually being transferred to the private sector? And, what is the role of politicians in promoting the public interest where P3s are concerned?

"There's no one perfect perspective. It's really coming to a consensus on how to work together and hopefully build the trust and acceptance of different ways of doing things," Collier states.

"P3s aren't perfect in every situation. They are pretty good for some situations. Where can P3s work the best? Where should we maybe do it the more traditional way?"

Some of the speakers for this year's conference include MPP Peter Milczyn, who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister of economic development, employment and infrastructure; Michael Harris, MPP and transportation critic; Mike Schreiner, leader of the Green Party of Ontario; Deborah Brown, principal consultant, WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff; Mark Romoff, president and CEO of The Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships; Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association; and Mike Yorke, president of Carpenters' District Council of Ontario Local 27, to name a few.

"There's so much expertise in the room," Collier says. "There's going to be a lot of information and food for thought."

Transport Futures has been facilitating discussion on mobility pricing measures since 2008, with more than 100 international experts speaking on various topics over the years. For more information, visit <http://www.transportfutures.ca>.