

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

---

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

Feb. 22, 2008

P3

Anti-privatization rally in Toronto misses the mark. Transport planning will include consultation

VINCE VERSACE

staff writer

A union-led protest against the possible use of public-private partnerships in transportation planning is not looking at the whole picture.

“Metrolinx is looking at design and build concepts, not selling off lines to private companies,” says Andy Manahan, Executive Director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance (RCCAO) and a Metrolinx transportation advisory board member.

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council organized the No Transit Privatization rally earlier this week at the Harbour Castle Westin Hotel.

Metrolinx is the new name under which the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority conducts business.

In rally literature, the council stated that Metrolinx is requiring that every new transit project “consider a public-private partnership option for its delivery.”

“Will all the vehicles be built offshore, like other P3 projects,” the council wonders.

The RCCAO recently commissioned Transportation Opportunities in the Greater Toronto Area, a study written by transportation analyst Dr. Richard Soberman. In the report Soberman describes the current approach to funding transit initiatives as “ask and pray.” Municipalities have to make funding requests to provincial and federal governments and then “hope for the best.” Soberman points to private sector participation as an option to help move some transit projects along.

“There are opportunities to engage the private sector in delivering infrastructure more cost effectively through [a] competitive process for design and construction or even design, build

and maintain packages,” wrote Soberman.

Among other funding options to consider are road tolls to fund GTA transportation needs with a move to region-wide pricing. Gas tax transfers and a GTA-wide vehicle tax could generate \$6 billion for transit planning needs, states Soberman.

Manahan disagrees with labour council claims that Metrolinx has no practice for “receiving deputations from the public” on how public dollars could be spent.

“There is a consultative process in place and Metrolinx will hear from all kinds of different groups on transportation matters,” he said.

The Metrolinx Web site describes the group’s “community engagement commitment” as a promise to “engage transportation stakeholders, service providers and the public” about the work it is doing, including and not limited to the development of a regional transportation plan.

The site includes a public consultation and venue calendar. “We will close the loop too. You’ll be able to hear and read what others have told us and as much as possible, tell you how

we’re using the input we receive,” the Metrolinx site states.