

Long-term funding needed, author says: Put experts, not politicians, in charge.

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Published: Friday, November 17, 2006

A better commute begins with better management of the GTA's transportation system, a new report from urban planner Richard Soberman says.

The study -- Transportation Challenges in the Greater Toronto Area -- says the new Greater Toronto Transportation Authority should be stacked with experts, not politicians.

And it should be given real power: control over provincial and federal funding.

The \$6-billion in recent government investment has focused on short-term projects, leaving the GTA without any long-term, predictable funding, the study finds.

"We need to put a stop to funding which is very short-term and picks particular projects, which provide great photo opportunities and there is no long-term commitment. There are also a lot of announcements, which are exactly that announcements and the funds never appear," Mr. Soberman says.

"No organization can function if it doesn't know what its future revenues are going to be or what they're like to be, it doesn't matter what kind of organization you have."

The McGuinty government this year created the GTTA, and named outgoing Burlington mayor Rob MacIsaac as its chairman, aiming to co-ordinate transportation policy across the many municipalities of the sprawling region.

But Mr. Soberman said the process must be depoliticized.

"It's all pointless because you don't have the right guys making the right decisions," he says.

"There is nothing wrong with elected officials but they are not necessarily the people who can take a hard look at needs and priorities and spend money in the most proper fashion. For one thing, they are elected for a short period of time ... they have obvious conflicts of interest."

The GTTA should look at implementing a single smart card covering the TTC, York Region Transit, Mississauga Transit and GO Transit, the study finds.