

## Rob Ford promises to ‘bore, bore’ bore’ subways — without a tax increase

Critics say proposal to build a 32-kilometre expansion for \$9 billion is “deceptive” and not doable for anything like that amount.



Keith Beaty / Toronto Star

Mayor Rob Ford discusses his all-subway proposal at a news conference Wednesday. Critics were quick to say the proposal was poorly conceived and would billions more than Ford acknowledged.

**By:** Betsy Powell City Hall Bureau, Published on Wed Sep 03 2014

Rob Ford says his campaign promise to build 32 kilometres of subway tunnels beneath Toronto streets — paid for with funding “options” not taxes — is a “viable and realistic” plan. Critics say it is just the opposite.

The first phase of Ford’s plan recalls his previous campaign for mayor — an extension of the Sheppard subway east from Don Mills Station. That would replace the current plan to build a Sheppard LRT on the road to McCowan. The Sheppard subway extension would connect with the council-approved Scarborough subway, which extends the Bloor-Danforth line northeast from Kennedy Station.

Ford is also promising that if he’s re-elected mayor on Oct. 27, he would build a “relief” line” linking Queen St. to Pape Ave., bury the already-in-progress Eglinton Crosstown LRT along the above-ground portion from Laird to Kennedy Rd. and connect the future Finch West station to Humber College.

These 32 kilometres of new subway lines would cost \$9 billion, he told a news conference Wednesday at his Etobicoke campaign headquarters.

“You bore, bore, bore until the cows come home,” the mayor said referring to the machines used to dig proposed routes.

“This is a bold and ambitious vision for years to come — for your kids, for your grandkids.”

Ford’s funding claims were met with widespread skepticism.

“I don’t know how on Earth with a straight face he can promise 32 kilometres of subway construction for \$9 billion,” said Murtaza Haider, associate dean at Ryerson University’s Ted Rogers School of Management

He noted that Metrolinx, the Crown agency that manages transportation in the GTA, estimated a proposed 13-kilometre Downtown Relief Line alone would cost \$7.4 billion in 2014 dollars.

Ford’s proposed plan “would cost at least double that amount, probably more,” Haider said.

Without an accurate cost estimate, there’s no point in evaluating Ford’s proposed funding options, he said. They include partnerships with senior levels of government, development charges, the sale of assets along the proposed transit corridors, air rights above subway stations and the reallocation of \$2 billion by cancelling the Sheppard and Finch LRTs.

York University political professor Roger Keil, who has studied transit issues, said Ford’s plan “doesn’t make any sense at all.” He can’t imagine any credible transit expert endorsing it.

“This has to be treated as a little melody that the Pied Piper plays and he is attempting for people to follow him,” said Keil.

“It is an incredibly deceptive document and it’s also quite childish, to be honest ... back-of-the-envelope kind of representation.”

Keil is worried the residents most underserved by transit, in north Scarborough and Etobicoke, will buy in to the idea that subways are the only solution, when “these people would be much better served with the LRTs that were on the books.”

He, and others, argue Toronto’s congestion problems can’t wait for subway construction and that there needs to be a range of transit options, including buses, streetcars and LRTS.

Andy Manahan, executive director of the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**, said Ford’s proposal to bury more of the Eglinton Crosstown than currently planned is at odds with his claim of having “respect for taxpayers.”

“It’s really, really costly to change plans in mid-stream,” Manahan said.

Nor is he impressed with Ford’s various funding schemes. “In my opinion this is like, in football terms, the Hail Mary play,” Manahan said, using a Fordesque analogy.