

# Traffic woes will get much worse

**study: Hundreds of thousands of more cars expected in next 25 years**

**Katie Rook, National Post**

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Your daily commute is only going to get worse, a new study warned yesterday, with hundreds of thousands of more cars expected to clog GTA roadways during the morning rush hour in the next 25 years.

Residents of high-growth areas without comprehensive transit systems, such as Brampton, are likely to suffer the worst, said Richard Soberman, lead author of the study, commissioned by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

"Those living in places with projected employment and development changes are likely to be in the most trouble, unless transportation systems are implemented," he said.

More than \$1-billion must be spent on GTA transportation infrastructure immediately, he said.

The study, Transportation Challenges in the Greater Toronto Area, was released yesterday. It targets the City of Toronto's official plan, which promotes transit, not new roadways.

"Companies will be forced to leave the downtown and move to the 905 area to be close to their workers. Toronto can probably kiss its aspirations for employment growth goodbye," he said.

Using development and population growth patterns outlined by a recent Ontario government report, Places To Grow, the study anticipates a GTA transportation infrastructure ill-equipped to handle swelling populations.

By 2031, about 146,000 Markham commuters will flood the roadways during the peak morning commute, joining an additional 80,000 Vaughan commuters and 154,000 from Brampton, the study finds.

The influx will cripple already-congested transportation routes, which TD Bank Financial Group estimates is already costing the GTA \$2-billion annually.

The study predicts that over the next two decades, the Brampton 407 area will see an increase of about 140,000 jobs, while Markham and other communities along Highway 404 will host more than 120,000 additional jobs.

Despite considerable growth, Brampton, for example, is poorly served by transit, and is centred among a maze of already-congested highways and roadways, he said. Those who live in such a place or commute to it for work will become stranded.

"Even though most of the growth is occurring outside downtown Toronto, the city is still dominant in terms of work and therefore the people that are going to have the greatest difficulty are people going downtown who don't live in locations that have rail," he said.

Simply moving near your workplace is not enough in an era where people switch jobs often, he said.

"The argument can be that, 'Well, so what, the guys who live in 407 Brampton [area] will work there, they'll live there. It's not a big deal.' But the world has changed ... today people change jobs every four to five years, it's a whole different kind of economic base," he said.

His report recommends GTA municipalities consider public-private partnerships to expand transportation infrastructure, and dismisses the environmental assessment process as "one of the surest means of ensuring nothing gets done."

And it calls on the provincial government to declare transit an essential service, prohibiting strikes and lockouts in favour of binding arbitration.

Mr. Soberman harshly criticized the new St. Clair Avenue streetcar right-of-way in Toronto, saying the city badly needs more subways.

"We need to have underground construction because the streets simply won't take it," Mr. Soberman said. "The problem we've had in the last two decades is that we insist on building subways where the people aren't. The people happen to be on Queen Street, on King Street, on Eglinton Avenue."

New roads must also be built, he added, because many people travel from suburb to suburb not connected by bus or rail.

"We all love transit, but it's just not going to do everything for everyone, we're going to have to build some roads," Mr. Soberman said.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario is comprised of labour and management groups in the construction industry.