

Industry Perspectives Op-Ed: Highway 413 needed to keep Greater Toronto Area on the move

Nadia Todorova December 20, 2021



Building Highway 413 will bring an economic boost to Ontario during its construction and create a transportation corridor for the long-term economic competitiveness of a region slated to exponentially grow over the next 25 years.

These are the key findings from a commissioned [RCCAO jobs and economic impact study](#).

The report found the project will create up to 8,000 direct and indirect jobs a year during construction, generate \$2.3 billion in earnings for Ontario workers, and create up to 600 apprenticeship opportunities to train Ontario's next generation of builders.

Ontario's Greater Toronto Area is among the fastest growing regions in North America. The GTA expects to welcome an additional 2.8 million people over the next 25 years, with 58 per cent of that population growth destined for York, Halton and Peel regions. The expected population growth will increase demand for critical infrastructure for everything from water, wastewater, housing, transit systems, highways and roads.

Ontario's grappled with growing pains in recent decades and our governments' ability to plan and build infrastructure has not always kept pace with the needs.

That is why Highway 413 is vital. The gridlock the region experiences today already comes with significant economic costs — \$11 billion per year in lost productivity and very real impacts on quality of life for residents.

Thankfully, the Government of Ontario included significant investments in infrastructure as a part of Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy's Fall Economic Statement. Two key highlights are the new funding for the construction of the Bradford Bypass in the northern GTA and funding the land acquisition required to bring Highway 413 and the transportation corridor it would create in the western GTA closer to reality.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario has been actively engaging decision-makers at Queen's Park, including the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs who are studying Bethlenfalvy's Fall Economic Statement, Bill 43, as it works its way through the legislative process. While opponents have gone into overdrive, it is important to have a nuanced discussion when debating our province's future.

Highway 413 is so much more than just a highway. It is a critically needed infrastructure asset for our growing region. What opponents fail to recognize is that it would also create the capabilities for other transit infrastructure, including a dedicated transitway for bus or LRT transit to serve the region.

Together, it creates a corridor that can meet the future needs of Ontario industries and people in vibrant communities alike.

In the regions the highway would serve, 80 per cent of people currently commute by car. When you listen to the project's opponents, one may be left with the impression this region is new to motor vehicles and that it will never undergo any meaningful changes, be they population or workforce based. This could not be further from the truth.

Additionally, the increasing electrification of vehicles, whether for people commuting or long-haul trucking, will need roads and highways that complement local transportation dynamics that incorporate foot, bike, transit and vehicle use.

Technological advancements in hydrogen as a fuel source offers great promise to substantially reduce environmental impact and to green trucking fleets that deliver virtually everything needed in our lives.

Infrastructure lays the foundation for building a prosperous and inclusive province.

As Ontario seeks to recover from the effects of COVID-19, the role of infrastructure has never been more important. Strategic investments in infrastructure provide a boost to the economy during construction and support conditions for long-term economic growth.

As the backbone of local and regional economies, roads and highways are essential for the movement of goods across Ontario.

They allow products to move efficiently through the supply chain and to end-use customers throughout the region and beyond.

With this context in mind, Highway 413 is critical and necessary transportation and transit infrastructure for Ontario. It is a highway for the future that will feature innovative and forward-looking technologies.

As an industry, we need to continually make that case to a weary and busy public. These investments will make it easier to keep Ontario on the move toward prosperity.

Nadia Todorova is the executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (www.rccao.com). Send Industry Perspectives comments and column ideas to editor@dailycommercialnews.com.