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Transit underfunding in Toronto, Hamilton costing region \$3 billion

'Emerging consensus that something needs to be done,' Toronto City Summit Alliance says

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A lack of reliable funding for transportation and transit infrastructure in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is a \$3 billion drag on the area's economy, says the Toronto City Summit Alliance.

"The result has been more traffic congestion on roads and more crowding on transit," a report by the summit alliance concludes.

"The GTHA has become a world leader in forcing residents to waste the maximum amount of time in their vehicle of choice, whether at work or play."

"Time to get serious: reliable funding for GTHA transit/transportation infrastructure" is the report by the summit alliance designed to drive information and debate on funding alternatives and investment issues to help reach "informed decisions on an investment strategy for GTHA's future transit/transportation system."

The summit alliance is a multi-sectoral coalition of civic leaders who develop and support initiatives addressing issues critical to the future health and wealth of the Toronto region.

"Several years ago it would be unlikely to have such a diverse group coming together to talk about the need for some sort of (transit and transportation) funding outside the normal taxes," noted Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario and a summit alliance group member. "This is not about a lack of consensus but an emerging consensus that something needs to be done and that the actual funding tool to deliver it still needs more dialogue."

The summit alliance's report covers the accelerating problem of GTHA traffic congestion, the urgent need to implement Metrolinx's Regional Transportation Plan, substantial funding shortfalls and alternative funding sources to finance the plan and related improvements. Between 2001 and 2006 the direct annual costs of congestion continued to grow, exceeding \$3 billion from \$2 billion in 2001.

"It's time for our city region and its leadership to take on the challenge of deciding how to pay for the transit and other infrastructure we all know we need," said John Tory, voluntary chair of the summit alliance, in a statement.

From 1986 to 2006 the GTHA's supply of roads in lane-kilometres increased by 56 per cent while the vehicle-kilometres of personal vehicle travel demand using those roads increased by 106 per cent. During the same 20-year period the supply of transit grew by 18 per cent but the demand in passenger-kilometres grew by 45 per cent, the summit alliance report found.

The report looked at alternative sources for transit and transportation funding investment and four options, GTHA road tolls; regional gas tax; commercial parking levy and regional sales tax are capable of collecting \$1-2 billion a year. Among the sources which could net anywhere from \$40 to \$800 million annually are high

occupancy toll lanes, HST revenue from gas tax, central area congestion levy or utility bill levy.