

DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

March 21, 2011

Ministry of Transportation of Ontario public transit guidelines omit road-pricing options

VINCE VERSACE

staff writer

Inclusion of technological pricing innovations and mechanisms would strengthen Ontario's recently released draft transit-supportive guidelines, says the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

"The guidelines have various good strategies — we were a little disappointed that no road-pricing strategies are mentioned, but in the future they will be critical," said Andy Manahan, executive director of RCCAO.

Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) draft Transit-Supportive Guidelines set out a range of strategies designed to boost transit ridership, which in turn will support provincial and municipal policies related to transportation, land use and the environment.

Manahan said that the draft guidelines are a "progressive document but with an unfortunate omission," which is the lack of noted road pricing strategies.

"MTO's updated guidelines provide strategies that support transit operationally, financially and culturally," added Manahan. "If this is to occur in the next 20 years, road pricing and other measures that level the playing field between single-occupancy vehicles and transit will be needed sooner than later."

MTO is updating and expanding the guidelines, first published jointly with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1992.

The draft guidelines include over 50 guidelines and almost 450 strategies to assist urban planners, transit planners, developers and others create an environment that is supportive of transit and increases transit ridership.

"The 2011 guidelines also include, for the first time, strategies for growing ridership through a range of tools, management approaches and technologies," the guideline states.

Among the guidelines themes are:

- Encouraging compact patterns of development at densities capable of supporting transit service.
- Encouraging infill development and enhance street and open space networks to increase the overall density and mix of uses around transit services.
- Locating transit stops and stations where they are easily accessible to the largest number of people and can contribute to the efficient delivery of transit services
- Considering the layout, design and orientation of buildings and parking to help support transit ridership by integrating transit facilities into surrounding areas

RCCAO noted that there is no mention of tolled highway corridors, high occupancy toll lanes, priced zones or

fully priced road networks as possible strategies to help improve transit and reduce congestion.

For instance, priced zones can be established around congested urban areas to “to improve multi-modal traffic flow and raise revenues for transit and other transport infrastructure,” the association stated.

RCCAO explained that road pricing strategies can influence motorists to take transit, improves transit service because there is less congestion (resulting in shorter trip times for all transportation modes) and can raise revenue for new or redesigned infrastructure that the draft guidelines encourage such as transit, complete streets, urban design and parking facilities.

Also, the “financial payback time (four years)” for a road pricing system is quicker compared to road and rail investments which typically deliver a return between 15 and 25 years.