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Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario

RCCAO recommends accelerated funding strategy for Metrolinx

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Provincial legislation designed to establish the new Metrolinx received full support from an industry association but it wishes an accelerated funding strategy had been included.

“Going down the line, this could be significant,” says Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO). “Right now, they have $11.5 billion, but there still is a $40 billion gap.”

The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act 2009 was drawn up after the consolidation of Metrolinx and GO Transit.

The intent of this merger is to help get transit infrastructure project decisions and work done quicker, ease congestion and create thousands of jobs.

Metrolinx is responsible for a $50-billion, 25-year transit plan called The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Among the plans highlights are construction of the Sheppard East LRT and York Region’s VIVA system.

The plan also has a list of 15 top transit priorities for the region. Ontario has already committed $11.5 billion for the Sheppard LRT and VIVA projects in the plan, but funding beyond those projects is not clear.

The province asked for recommendations and feedback from groups regarding the new act and among RCCAO’s was that Metrolinx’s investment plan be accelerated by one year.

New funding tools could then be delivered no later than eight months after the October 2011 provincial election, explains RCCAO.

Instead, the legislation requires the new Metrolinx provide its investment strategy by June 1, 2013, including “proposals for revenue generation tools that may be used by the province or the municipalities” to support the implementation of the regional transportation plan.

“Metrolinx will have to move quickly to develop an investment strategy for the remaining $40 billion but why wait until the middle of the government’s next mandate to come out with funding options?” Manahan asks. “This funding dilemma will be further exacerbated by dwindling fuel tax revenues as more fuel efficient, hybrid and electric vehicles come online.”

Another area of possible fine tuning is allowing the Metrolinx board to appoint some of its own directors and its chief executive director to help eliminate the appearance that it is controlled by the province.