

## Scarborough subway cost could be much higher than TTC's 'best estimate'

By: [Tess Kalinowski](#) Transportation reporter, Published on Fri Jul 19 2013



The current SRT stop at Kennedy Rd. and Ellesmere Rd. is sandwiched by townhouses under construction, and industrial/commercial complexes. The proposed subway route bypasses this area, heading north along a route well to the east.

City and provincial politicians offered assurances Friday that a \$400 million funding dispute between TTC chair Karen Stintz and Ontario's transportation minister hasn't derailed the Scarborough subway.

But questions remain about the significance of that amount, given that no one is quite sure what the total bill will be.

Transportation Minister Glen Murray and Stintz publicly vowed Friday to stop sniping at one another and start collaborating to coax Ottawa to the funding table.

Stintz and city council insist Queen's Park has to deliver the \$1.8 billion it originally promised to replace the Scarborough RT with light rail transit.

But Murray is firm there's only \$1.4 billion left to extend the Bloor-Danforth subway north of Kennedy Station — \$400 million must pay for renovations to Kennedy Station for the Eglinton

Crosstown LRT. A further \$85 million has been lost in work on the Scarborough LRT, according to Metrolinx.

But \$1.4 billion is enough to start a subway, said Councillor Doug Ford. His brother Mayor Rob Ford will be reaching out to Queen's Park and Ottawa for more funding on Monday.

The estimated price of the 7-kilometre, three-stop Scarborough subway is \$2.3 billion.

"That's our best estimate," said TTC CEO Andy Byford. It's based on the concept and previous experience. But it comes with the TTC's standard cushion of plus-or-minus 30 per cent.

"We have to put that caveat on, because we haven't done any of the design yet. Until we have done about 30 per cent of the design, we just have no way of saying exactly what the costs will be," he said. "We're dealing with so many unknowns at the moment that we can't say for certain what that cost will be."

The unknowns can include soil conditions, geo-technical issues, the precise length of the subway, property acquisitions and the bids the TTC receives from construction companies.

Sometimes all goes according to plan. The TTC built the Sheppard subway on time and on budget in 2002 for about \$1 billion.

But Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong points to what's happened with the Leslie St. connector track to a new lakefront streetcar garage. It was estimated to cost \$14 million in 2009. Following utility work, a scope change, design and a series of community consultations, it's now \$105 million.

Another 30 per cent on the Scarborough subway brings the TTC's "drive-by estimate" to \$3.3 billion, he said.

"The probability is exceedingly high this project will grow significantly in cost," said Minnan-Wong. He points to studies showing that municipal governments, caught up in the urgency of local projects, vastly underestimate costs.

**A [2010 study](#) by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario cited a survey of 58 North American rail projects. The average cost escalation was 45 per cent.**

Provincial agency Metrolinx figures the \$85 million in sunk costs of the rejected LRT this way: \$21 million were spent on the SRT-route share of light rail vehicle (LRV) design; \$41 million on planning, design and management; and \$3 million on property acquisition.

What it will cost to renegotiate the LRV order with Bombardier remains unknown. Keeping the SRT running during the subway construction is expected to cost \$60 million (Metrolinx's number) to \$96 million (TTC's number) over five years, and de-commissioning the SRT will cost a further \$75 million.

In the end, as well, a Scarborough subway will have ripple effects through the rest of the TTC. Thousands more riders on the Bloor-Danforth line will further press the need for a downtown relief line to relieve overcrowding. The Bloor-Danforth subway will require the upgraded signaling currently being installed on the Yonge line.

And if there is a shortfall, warned Byford, “don’t think about raiding ‘state-of-good-repair.’” That’s the money the TTC needs to keep the existing system running safely and reliably, and it’s already been pared back to the bare essentials.