

## **Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa-Carleton**

### **Transportation Working Group Submission on the TMP Update: DOWNTOWN TRANSIT SOLUTION AND RAPID TRANSIT NETWORK**

April 16, 2008

Committee Chairs and Members:

The Transportation Working Group of the FCA submits the following remarks concerning the proposed downtown transit solution and the proposed rapid transit network for consideration by the joint Transit and Transportation Committees:

- Ottawa is rapidly becoming what Statistics Canada and geographers like myself describe as a poly-nucleated census metropolitan area. Jobs are shifting from the core to the periphery, and the city's high population growth areas are the three Town Centres outside of the Greenbelt. In 25 years there will be numerous downtowns that the public transit system will need to serve: our current Central Area, Kanata-Stittsville, Barrhaven-Riverside South, and Orleans-Cumberland. Will any of the options on the table today meet the transit demands of four competing downtowns?
- whichever transit system option is chosen today, either 1, 2, 3, 4, or a variant, Ottawa's public transit system must be effective, efficient, safe, comfortable, convenient, and affordable to the taxpayers funding it and the public who use it;
- the TWG supports the creation of a true hub and spoke system incorporating light rail serving Ottawa's Central Business District. A Light Rail Transit connection also needs to be extended to Ottawa's international airport and across the Prince of Wales Bridge to an STO bus terminus located in the Hull Sector of Gatineau;
- if a tunnel is built to accommodate downtown light rail lines, then a quid pro quo approach must be taken to an increase in surface vehicle capacity created by building a downtown subway. Unless this increased traffic capacity is restricted in some manner (for instance, a substantial increase in long-term off-street parking rates in the central core), it is very likely that the prospect of a now faster commute will increase the numbers of single occupant vehicles heading to and from work downtown;
- commuting patterns in Canada's 27 CMAs are changing because of the transformation of the jobs/housing landscapes away from the old city centre-suburban model to the multi-nodal one already discussed. Statistic's Canada's recent report, *Work and Commuting in Census Metropolitan Areas, 1996-2001* shows that of the 575 thousand people employed in Ottawa-Hull in 2001, 119 thousand (21%) worked in downtown Ottawa. A further 198 thousand people worked in Hull, Tunney's Pasture, Kanata, West Hunt Club, and the Industrial-Belfast-St. Laurent area. The remaining 259 thousand people didn't work

downtown or in any of the other five employment clusters. Further, the report speaks to commuting patterns created from census data. The commutes by origin and destination indicates that 42% of the daily work trips in Ottawa came from households located within a 10 kilometer radius of downtown (this is an arc anchored by the Nortel campus in the west, the Ottawa international airport in the south and Place D'Orleans Shopping Centre in the east). A further 27% of commutes were the traditional outside-to-inside city centre variety. However, 30% of daily work trips were reverse trips or within-suburb or between suburb trips. Comparing the percent growth of these home-to-work trips shows that while the short distance and suburban-to-downtown trips each increased by 7% in five years, the reverse commute volume went up 39%, the within-suburb trips increased 40%, and the between-suburb commute volumes increased by 20%. The TWG hopes that the data from relevant reports such as this one was given appropriate weight when staff create the four rapid transit options before committee today;

- the Rideau Street problem must be resolved. Currently, Rideau Street is a congested, noisy, unattractive transit priority corridor and an out-of-province truck route with an understandably ailing retail and service sector. The rehabilitation of Rideau Street must be a priority for the staff that will be tasked with designing the downtown segment of the rapid transit system;
- the TWG fails to comprehend the utility of building a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit line to Kanata North given that Ottawa's IT sector has already been allowed to build thousands of free parking spaces there for its employees. Further, existing travel lanes are available on March Road and Eagleson Road for exclusive OCTranspo bus lanes;
- the TWG has serious reservations with the plan to run light rail along the Ottawa River Parkway between Westboro Village and the Lincoln Fields Transit Station. Mistakes were made 25 years ago that saw the approved transit route along the former Byron Avenue streetcar line abandoned for a far cheaper and politically expedient route along the Western Parkway. This current bus way along the Ottawa River is certainly picturesque, however the customers it serves are squirrels, ducks, geese and groundhogs, not city taxpayers living in proximity to Richmond Road or along Richmond Road in the City Council approved Community Design Plan area where the target modal split has been set at 40%;
- the TWG feels that the new transit plan needs to focus very clearly on getting Ottawa's suburban and rural population out of their cars and onto the train and bus. One way to do this is to build park and rides – not the 20 vehicle one with a single, lonely sodium vapour lamp attached to a pole at some remote intersection on the 416 – but the kind that attracts the driver who switches to the public transit system 10 to 15 kilometers away from their destination. We suggest that staff talk to their European contemporaries for advice on this, as these facilities have been a feature on the transportation landscape there for the last 50 years;

- from a public safety standpoint, the ongoing problems with unacceptable behaviour and incidents on specific transit routes and at a number of transit stations have to be remedied in order to make the current transit system and the expanded one attractive to current and potential transit users;
- the TWG is pleased to see that this project will be peer reviewed, however, where's the representative from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania? For your information, Pittsburgh is the only winter city in North America that has a public transit system comprised of surface rail, dedicated bus ways and a downtown subway;
- city staff and politicians are asking the public to buy in to this latest plan for rapid transit. The TWG feels that City Hall should lead by example. Why are so many of our 17,000 municipal employees still driving to work and parking for free when, eight years after amalgamation, appropriate Transportation Demand Management policies should have put most of these people on the bus; and,
- finally, the TWG submits that the approved transit corridors, the transit modes chosen for those corridors, and the adopted operating standards of Ottawa's upgraded and expanded rapid transit system must reflect the travel needs of the population it serves and will serve, not simply what transportation planners, traffic engineers and local politicians want.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Blatherwick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John Blatherwick

Chair, Transportation Working Group  
Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa-Carleton