

Minister Gary Goodyear, M.P.  
1425 Bishop Street N, Unit 3  
Cambridge Ontario, N1R 6J9

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear Minister Goodyear:

The Cambridge Chamber of Commerce has long been opposed to the Proposed Light Rail Project in the Region of Waterloo. Much of our opposition for this is "Too Much", "Too Soon", "Wrong Technology". While we understand there are municipalities in the past who implemented projects like this with a population base close to the Region's current level, but there are few examples in the world of such a low density population considering this type of public transit. However Calgary began construction on their LRT in 1978, 36 years ago, which demonstrates this is not the latest in public transit options. Technology advancements have come a long way in 36 years to the point where if you don't have LRT now, why would you consider it. Most innovative communities are thinking in other directions, which largely consist of rapid bus with alternative energy solutions, which give a greater degree of flexibility in meeting the needs of riders. Also off grade systems are preferred in areas already built up as on grade systems congest already congested roadways.

The Region is claiming that it is urgent that they implement a light rail system before the community gets so built up that it is impossible to construct. This is in reality a scare tactic and certainly a ridiculous assumption. Most if not all municipalities who have in the past adopted this type of transit service, were much larger than the population base currently in the Region. In fact Minneapolis-Saint Paul with a population area of 3.2 million people is just now getting around to this type of transit. The first leg opened (Metro Blue Line) in 2004, and leg 2 is destined to open in June of this year. Both of these lines are similar in length and cost to the Region's, but spreading this over such a large population makes it a viable expenditure and ridership may well support it as well.

We are also very concerned that the numbers, which we assume led to the Federal Government's commitment of 265 million dollars, are purposely exaggerated to gain the support for funding. The Region is proposing that its daily ridership will nearly equal the Minneapolis Metro Blue Line system when in fact their system passes by some of the State of Minnesota's most prominent attractions, Vikings Stadium, Twin's Stadium, Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America the largest Mall in the United States with over 522 stores and 12,000 employees working there. We find it impossible to equate the Region's ridership to be anywhere near theirs, but in fact the Region suggests that to be so.

We've suggested that an increased focus on making our connecting service called IXpress broader and more effective will achieve much of the public transportation advantages required to meet current and prospective needs for the next 20 to 30 years. By 2031, the Region of Waterloo is expected to have 750,000 people. We believe that would be the time to look at viable, economical and advanced transit systems for the future. Light Rail is a modified version of the Electric Streetcar that made its first appearance on Canadian streets in Toronto on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1894. This is hardly state of the art technology nor is it the future of public transportation. The Region cites congestion issues, the need to create new roads that are expensive, and that the Knowledge Economy are urbanites who like to live and work in core areas. All of these have a foundation of truth. Obviously congestion is likely to rise in a growing community. Progress in of itself will drive congestion and while our Region is going to grow by 200,000 people in the next two decades, over 90% of them will require a road network that meets expectations. In 2018 Nissan will introduce the driverless car technology to consumers, and by 2020 every auto manufacturer has committed to having this technology. Your own Ministry of Transport is currently developing guidelines for this technology that will create the foundation of regulated, controlled and safe personal

transportation, thus relieving congestion and mitigating incidents. I'm sure 10 years ago this was seen as a pipe dream, but we have on most new cars the option for collision avoidance technology, and we can even buy a car today that will park itself. These vital and important technological revolutions cannot be overlooked as tools that will address congestion and certainly safety. Advancements in battery powered vehicles and alternative energy solutions will most definitely make transportation more cost effective in the future, not more expensive. So our opinion is that ridership percentages are more likely stay in the 5 to 8 % of the population.

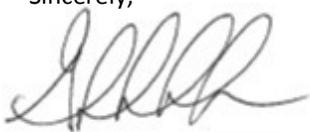
The City has engaged public transportation experts, not one of them says this project has the merit the Region is claiming. Ridership will never meet the projections, Stage 2 that the Region insists will be rapidly forthcoming to Cambridge, these experts suggest we won't meet the minimum criteria till the turn of the Century, yet Cambridge Property Taxpayers will have to pay one third of Stage 1 from Conestoga Mall to Fairview Mall, yet may never see it. This makes no sense, when the Region has already area rated the Townships out of the funding equation because, "they aren't getting it". We believe the same should be done for Cambridge. We suspect when Cambridge meets the necessary guidelines, more advanced systems will be available, and Stage 1 will be in need of replacement in any event.

35 years ago, Chair Seiling told me this was a Kitchener/Waterloo dream to have a rail service in their community. Cambridge wasn't considered largely because public transit was a separated service then. In 2000 transit united in the Region and by 2001, with new found assessment required to implement a system in KW, the Region started down its path of developing an LRT system.

This is an extremely divisive project, likely the most divisive in the history of the Region. The Region is allocating much of its future resources into providing a system to accommodate less than 10% of the population, and possibly jeopardizing the investment in growth related infrastructure needs to accommodate a rising population of 200,000 like Sanitary and Water system needs. 25 years ago the Region was suggesting the need for a pipeline from Lake Erie or Huron to supply the area's needs. We've had development proposals on hold in the past due to sanitary capacity. The Region's official plan suggested the discouragement of food processing industries locating here as they are high capacity water users and the effluent is discharged into a sanitary system that is nearing capacity, this is before 200,000 more people move to the Region. However, from a funding perspective, with all this in mind, we would suggest that the Federal Government ask for reasonable fact based expectations on the daily ridership numbers. We know that this obviously played a role in the Federal Government's decision to fund this, at least we trust that this was part of the criteria. And we can only conclude, based on a comparable length system in Minneapolis, with higher volume attractions along the route, the Regions numbers are not accurate and it is only responsible, before the money is spent that this be validated as it seems impossible.

I've taken the liberty to add to this a breakdown on the Minneapolis-Saint Paul project as well as the Regions "ION" project (addendum "A"). You will note the drastic difference in communities, but the proposed ridership the Region cites is nearly identical.

Sincerely,



Greg Durocher  
President/CEO

Cambridge Chamber of Commerce

## **Addendum "A"**

### **Minneapolis-St. Paul Minnesota – Population 3.2 Million**

(15<sup>th</sup> Largest Metro Area in the United States)

**Metro Blue Line – 19.8 KM** (completed in 2004 first LRT in the community)

**Significant Stops – Target Field** (Home of the Minnesota Twins seating capacity 39,504), **Metrodome** (Home of the Minnesota Vikings seating capacity 64,111), **Airport Terminal 1, Airport Terminal 2, Mall of Americas** (largest mall in USA, more than 522 stores, over 12,000 employees)

**Daily Weekday Riders (actual) – 33,500**

**Estimated Daily Ridership 2030 – 43,000** (est population 3.45 million)

(info directly from Metro Blue Line)

Metro Transit is one of the country's largest transit systems, providing roughly 90 percent of the **78 million** bus trips taken annually in the Twin Cities. Each weekday customers board Metro Transit buses and trains an average of 250,000 times.

Metro Transit operates the METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha), Northstar commuter rail line and **123 bus routes** — 66 are local-service routes and 51 are express routes and 6 contract service routes, using a fleet of **885 buses**. The majority of the agency's fleet (696) are standard 40-foot buses — 97 of these are hybrid-electric vehicles. Additionally, there are 167 articulated ("accordion") buses and 22 are over-the-road coach-style buses. All Metro Transit buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps and racks for bicycles. All trains feature storage areas for bicycles and luggage

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### **Region of Waterloo – Population 550,000**

**ION – 19 KM**

**Significant Stops – Conestoga Mall, University of Waterloo, Grand River Hospital, Fairview Park Mall**

**Daily Weekday Riders (estimated) – 29,200** (info to validate Fed/Prov contributions of 565 million)

**Estimated Daily Rider Average in 2031 – 41,208** (est population 750,000)

(Info from Regional Council Report June 2011)

Grand River Transit connects the three cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. In 2012, our ridership reached more than **21 million** (annually) and we travelled nearly 12 million kilometres. GRT has more than **240 buses**, 12 of those buses are Hybrid Electric buses. We also have an additional 30 MobilityPLUS vehicles in our fleet. We have roughly **66 regular routes** that service Waterloo Region. Some of our busiest routes include, route 7, 8, 12 and the iXpress routes.