

31 May 2016

Dear Ministers Del Duca, Chiarelli and Naqvi,

We are writing today with respect to the recently-announced 417 highway widening. Respectfully, we consider that the significant expenditure required to increase highway capacity – initially between Carling Avenue and Maitland Avenue, and in subsequent years from Maitland to the 416 – is unlikely to result in any meaningful reduction to congestion on the highway.

As an alternative, we would offer that a greater Provincial commitment to public transit – light rail in particular – would help Ottawa address its transportation needs. We consider that extending light rail further west into the growing Kanata community would have unmatched long-term benefits, and would ultimately allow both the Province and City to better manage long-term operating costs associated with transit and roads.

Just as importantly, we consider that greater investment in public transit would help the Province meet its laudable and ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. As you are aware, Ottawa City Council recently set our own GHG emission targets in line with those of the Province. You are very much to be congratulated on your leadership in this area, and we respectfully submit that re-visiting transportation infrastructure priorities in this instance would cement that direction.

An expanded Light Rail Transit to Kanata will further reduce operating and capital costs to our overall public transportation system, improve our environment, reduce congestion and ensure the City's sustainability in the long-term.

On the other hand, the proposed highway widening will dump more cars onto our city roadways, resulting in an increase to our capital and maintenance costs, reduce air quality and generate more noise in the affected neighbourhoods. The additional lanes will fail to address congestion and will only delay the required shift from private, individual vehicle use to public transit – a priority for both our levels of government.

There is a significant body of literature available on the concept of “induced demand” in transportation. We know that you are likely familiar with it, but the evidence demonstrates that when there is a greater supply of a resource, more of that resource is consumed. In the case of road capacity, it has been well documented that increasing the supply of road capacity induces more vehicles to take advantage of it. Simply, new road capacity is used to the point where congestion is as problematic as before the capacity was available. Spending additional money on road capacity at this juncture, when we have a choice to prioritize light rail, is problematic.

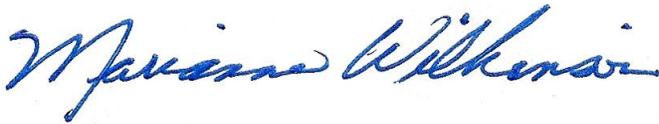
The residents of Kanata have been seeking accelerated LRT service for several years. Residents of Ottawa are keen to avoid the negative impacts of increased private vehicle use of our highways for commuting. Both purposes are best served by re-directing money proposed to be spent on road-widening to accomplish the expansion of Ottawa's western LRT sooner rather than later.

We would be pleased to discuss our concerns and suggested solution with you at your convenience. In the meantime, we would respectfully ask that the timetable for highway widening be postponed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. McKenney', written in a cursive style.

Catherine McKenney
Councillor, Somerset Ward, Ottawa

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marianne Wilkinson', written in a cursive style.

Marianne Wilkinson
Councillor, Kanata North Ward, Ottawa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Leiper', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Leiper
Councillor, Kitchissippi Ward, Ottawa

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