Communities on the Move:  
The Future of Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Final Report

May 17, 2013

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1. SUMMARY

The population of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is growing by 100,000 per year and a substantial number of new arrivals to the region are newcomers to Canada. Data from the 2011 National Household Survey, recently released by Statistics Canada, suggest that 2.5 million immigrants make their home in the Greater Toronto Area (46% of the total population), and that furthermore, more than 160,000 immigrants are living in Hamilton.

With the Communities on the Move project, CultureLink engaged with newcomer and diverse communities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, to share information about the Big Move and to learn from their experiences of transportation in the region and around the world.

We reached 778 people with these activities in March and April 2013. Our nine roundtable discussions were an opportunity to learn about the Big Move and to discuss transportation experiences in the GTHA and other metropolitan areas. 222 people participated in a “Communities on the Move” roundtable. Two of our activities were carried out in Mandarin and Cantonese and we produced a brochure in traditional and simplified Chinese for this purpose.

Through Communities on the Move, we heard first-hand about the many metropolitan regions around the world that have developed public transportation systems which provide a reliable, comfortable and affordable alternative to the private car. Many people had previously relied on public transit and spoke approvingly of the fast and efficient service and integrated systems they had experienced.

But for too many of the people we met, the system in the GTHA is falling short. Participants shared frustrations with long wait times, infrequent service and poor connections. Given this, it was not surprising that most participants responded positively to the Big Move. “Build it quickly!” said one participant. “It’s a dream to bring the systems together,” said another.
When considering the investment strategy required, participants emphasized the principle of fairness – that all parts of society make a contribution. At the same time, many expressed concerns about the impact of increased taxes and fees on low-income people, and want to see higher-income people, and the business sector, contribute in proportion to their greater resources.

Participants responded positively to the roundtable discussions. Of those who completed a survey following their roundtable, 87% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “I feel I am more aware of the importance of transit expansion, transportation investment, and the Big Move” and 90% said that they would share the information they learned with others.

We recorded and logged 756 individual comments during the roundtable sessions and from that we have produced this report and created a short video to document what we learned. By supporting this project, Metrolinx has gained input and feedback from project participants and has been introduced to stakeholder organizations which represent and serve newcomers and diverse communities in the GTHA.
2. WHAT WE DID AND HOW WE DID IT

Partnerships

CultureLink’s partnerships in the settlement sector and beyond made this project possible. With the assistance of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and the Chinese-Canadian National Council—Toronto Chapter, we identified agencies in each region which could host roundtable sessions modeled on the Metrolinx roundtables. We visited with these agencies in person to plan the roundtables and to explore opportunities to engage further with their staff or clients. Local hosts were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Local Host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Hamilton</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halton Region</td>
<td>Oakville</td>
<td>Halton Multicultural Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel Region</td>
<td>Malton</td>
<td>Malton Neighbourhood Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel Region</td>
<td>Mississauga (Cooksville)</td>
<td>City of Mississauga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel Region</td>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>Masumeen Islamic Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>CultureLink Settlement Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto (Scarborough)</td>
<td>St. Paul’s L’Amoreaux Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York Region</td>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>Welcome Centre Richmond Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Region</td>
<td>Ajax</td>
<td>Community Development Council Durham</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, with input from our partner Cycle Toronto, we invited people working in the area of transportation planning and active transportation within each municipality, and local transit agencies, to attend the roundtables to share route maps and other relevant information and to answer questions. The Town of Ajax, Brampton Transit, the City of Hamilton, the City of Mississauga, MiWay, Oakville Transit, Region of Peel and Walk and Roll Peel responded to this invitation. In addition, Toronto City Councillor Michael Del Grande and Mississauga City Councillor Nando Iannicca attended the Scarborough and Cooksville roundtables respectively, and Mississauga City Council Bonnie Crombie sent a representative to the Brampton roundtable.
Outreach

Local hosts had the primary responsibility for promoting the roundtable sessions and inviting people to participate. CultureLink supported their efforts by providing customized flyers, eventbrite pages, templates for press releases and outreach messages, and by sending out press releases for some events.

Each local host employed a different strategy for attracting the desired group of participants. The Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion and the Community Development Council Durham involved staff from their partner agencies, community leaders and constituents. Halton Multicultural Council and CultureLink Settlement Services made the roundtable session a part of a staff meeting ensuring the participation of people working with newcomer clients in the settlement sector. The Welcome Centre Richmond Hill scheduled their roundtable during Language Instruction for Newcomers classes, enabling large numbers of students and instructors to participate. The City of Mississauga promoted their session through active transportation email lists and social media tools. Members of the Masumeen Islamic Centre brought out people through their social networks.

Malton Neighbourhood Services and St. Paul’s L’Amoreaux Centre promoted the event to their regular base of clients and volunteers. Because much of the client base of St. Paul’s L’Amoreaux Centre is Chinese-Canadian, we used Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking facilitators for this event, who translated the presentations and hosted the roundtable conversations in the language preferred by participants.

Format of roundtables

The questions we asked in Communities on the Move roundtables were similar to those asked by Metrolinx. However, we customized the format for the Communities on the Move roundtables, drawing from our own experience of popular education and the input of the local hosts. In keeping with the principle that people are generally more open to learning new information after their own knowledge and experience has been
heard and recognized, we invited every participant to discuss their transportation experiences early in the session, before the Metrolinx presentation. We also invited local speakers to make a brief presentation about active transportation initiatives or public transit. The general format of the roundtable sessions was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome by CultureLink and/or the local host and/or local municipal representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction by CultureLink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundtable discussion on the theme of “Your Transportation Experiences”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report back by each table’s facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation by the Metrolinx representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation by the local municipality or a local transit agency, if available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roundtable discussions on the four themes, “Your Transportation Experiences”, “Understanding the Big Move”, “Funding Principles and Finances” and “Benefits to the Community and the Region”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report backs from each table’s facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing remarks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Roundtable participants were asked to complete a registration form, a Metrolinx photo release, and feedback form. Data from all forms and facilitator notes were logged electronically and coded for analysis where necessary. The forms are included in the “Documentation” section of this report, and all data is included on the enclosed CD.

**Facilitation team**

The roundtable sessions were facilitated by a team consisting of six volunteers, one consultant, and one CultureLink staff person. Five of the volunteers were past participants in CultureLink’s programs for newcomers to Canada and the sixth volunteer was referred by a past CultureLink participant. The team members were culturally diverse. The languages they could communicate in included Arabic, basic Cantonese, English, French, Hindi, Hungarian, Mandarin, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Taiwanese and Urdu. (Team members were not required to use all of these languages during the Communities on the Move project.) We held a training event to familiarize the group with the Big Move and the Metrolinx Conversation Kit and a closing session during which we recorded statements on video, about their experience and what they learned.
All team members live in the City of Toronto. For the most part, we travelled together to each roundtable session by public transit in combination with cycling and walking. At the conclusion of the project one team member remarked that he was glad to have made the trips by public transit because he could relate better to the issues raised by roundtable participants about the local and regional public transit system.

Additional activities

Beyond the roundtables we carried out two additional activities with partners. We staffed a display booth at the Chinese Health Information Forum organized annually by the Heart and Stroke Foundation to provide health information to Chinese-Canadians. We also made a presentation about the Big Move as part of the volunteer orientation of Cycle Toronto, focused on how the Big Move supports active transportation.
3. BY THE NUMBERS

Activities and participation

Through the Communities on the Move activities, we shared information about the Big Move with over 778 people, exceeding the target of 380 which we had established in our project proposal. 222 of these people were participants in a roundtable discussion, again exceeding our target of 180. While we delivered fewer activities overall than projected (13 rather than 18) we reached more people than anticipated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROUNDTABLES</td>
<td>• We carried out <strong>nine roundtables</strong>. We held two in the City of Toronto, three in Peel Region, and one each in Durham Region, York Region, Halton Region and the City of Hamilton.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>222 people</strong> attended a roundtable and completed a registration form.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>83 participants</strong> indicated on their registration form that they were a staff member, volunteer or consultant with an organization serving newcomers or diverse communities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Participants shared experiences of transportation in <strong>40 countries</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIX roundtable discussions held in Toronto, Durham Region, Peel Region, York Region and Hamilton, reaching 180 individuals, a majority of whom represent or serve newcomers and diverse community members in an organizational setting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>In addition to the roundtables, we organized <strong>four activities</strong> reaching <strong>556 people</strong>:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A training session for our 8-person facilitation team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A closing event with our facilitation team where we videotaped statements about their experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A presentation to the volunteer base of our partner Cycle Toronto, with 16 participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A display booth at the Chinese Health Information Forum, where we distributed 532 brochures and surveyed participants about active transportation and public transit in Mandarin and English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 followup activities scheduled, projected to reach 200 community members.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATERIALS/ACTIVITIES IN MANDARIN</td>
<td>• We created a <strong>brochure</strong> including content from the “Let’s Move” brochure and translated it to simplified and traditional Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As noted above, we carried out one <strong>multilingual roundtable session</strong> (English, Mandarin, Cantonese).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• As noted above, we staffed a display booth at the <strong>Chinese Health Information Forum</strong>.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Project Impact**

Participants rated the roundtable conversations positively. Large majorities agreed that because of the event, they were more aware of transportation issues and more likely to visit the Big Move website, and that they would share what they had learned with others. 55 participants said that they felt that their clients would benefit from a workshop on transportation options and issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROJECT IMPACT FOR PARTICIPANTS</strong></td>
<td>Roundtable participants completed a feedback form. Of these respondents:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Diverse communities will be more aware of the importance of transit expansion, transportation investment and the significance of The Big Move, and feel more included in conversations related to transportation priorities in the GTHA. | • 91% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “I found the event useful.”  
• 87% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “I feel I am more aware of the importance of transit expansion, transportation investment, and the Big Move.”  
• 84% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “As a result of this event, I am likely to visit the Big Move website ([www.bigmove.ca](http://www.bigmove.ca)).”  
• 90% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “I am likely to share the information I’ve learned with my clients or others.”  
• 83% agreed or completely agreed with the statement: “As a result of this event, I feel more included in the conversations about transportation priorities in the GTHA.”  
• 55 respondents said that they believed their clients would benefit from a workshop on transportation options and issues. |

| **PROJECT IMPACT FOR METROLINX**                  | 757 comments by roundtable participants were recorded by facilitators and note-takers and logged. These comments form the basis for part 4 of this report: “What participants said about the Big Conversation themes”.  
Metrolinx will gain input and feedback from project participants, and will be introduced to stakeholder organizations which represent and serve newcomers and diverse communities in the GTHA.  
Metrolinx was introduced to the nine local host agencies, eight of which are agencies serving newcomers and diverse communities.  
188 people agreed to receive information about this project and the Big Move, and provided their names and email addresses. The list is included on the accompanying CD. |
4. WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT THE BIG CONVERSATION THEMES

The four themes discussed in the Communities on the Move roundtables mirrored those in the Metrolinx roundtables. They were:

a. Your transportation experience today
b. Understanding the Big Move
c. Funding principles and finances
d. Benefits to your community and the region

a. Your transportation experience today

All participants were asked to consider two questions:

- How does the GTHA’s regional transportation system compare to other metropolitan areas you have experienced?
- What are the best and worst features of the GTHA transportation today?
During the conversation, participants referred to at least 40 different countries or specific cities in countries. Their recollections were vivid and energetic and demonstrated the importance of transportation in daily life, around the world.

It was clear that in many cities internationally, public transportation system is an efficient and reliable alternative to the private car. In addition, many participants highlighted integrated fare systems and innovative wayfinding systems.

“London has a good tube system, well connected from location to location. Not many different transportation systems only one fare takes you everywhere. And you pay accordingly - depending on distance.” – Brampton roundtable participant

“Beijing is very convenient, efficient. 2 minutes waiting time. Covers huge distances fast.” – Hamilton roundtable participant

“In India, a bus comes every 5 minutes. There are direct lines. In Toronto, more changes are needed, more complicated.” – Oakville roundtable participant

“In Hong Kong, the transportation system is convenient, fast and cheap. Only one card is used for all services, all kinds of transportation.” – Richmond Hill roundtable participant

“Japan - efficient, visual. Good for those unable to read maps or transit routes in a foreign language.” – Ajax roundtable participant

Some participants focused on the benefits of various public transit vehicles. Others highlighted different ways of managing road traffic and commuting, and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

“Dublin has LRT on narrow streets. It is doable.” – Brampton roundtable participant

“Fantastic subway in Montreal, built before 1960. They go to both shores and east-west across the Island.” – Scarborough roundtable participant

“In Pakistan we have dedicated lanes for trucks and carpool lanes.” – Brampton roundtable participant

“In Afghanistan, companies operate shuttles for their workers.” – Oakville roundtable participant

“Bogota has transformed into a cycling-friendly city.” – Toronto roundtable participant

“Germany: easy to get on buses/subways. More walkable. Here: bigger distances.” – Cooksville roundtable participant
Facilitators recorded 53 positive comments about the transportation system in the GTHA. Customer service, cleanliness and amenities of the system received the most positive feedback, followed by the system’s efficiency and connections.

There were significantly more (369) negative comments or concerns recorded. The largest number related to the system’s efficiency and connections, followed by complaints that fares are too high. Many identified issues particular to the regional system. Other comments were made about wayfinding and difficulties related to understanding maps and schedules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“In Shanghai I travelled by public transit. But here it is expensive and there is a long time waiting. We have TTC, Viva and York Region Transit, so there is difficulty in travelling across the region.” – Richmond Hill roundtable participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“For families, public transit is way too expensive. $40 on GO vs. $15-$20 in the van [to go downtown]” – Brampton roundtable participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I am now travelling by car, but would like to travel by GO Train. But I can’t figure out where trains stop and which route to take. I would like more information in other languages.” – Richmond Hill roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very costly. Some seniors stay home and only go out when they need to pay bills or buy groceries.” – Malton roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Understanding the Big Move

Participants were asked to consider two questions:

- Of the current and expected Big Move projects that you’ve learned about, which do you think will have the biggest impact for yourself, your family and for the region?
- What do you like best about The Big Move? Do you think everyone throughout the region would share your response? Why or why not?

Information about the Big Move was received enthusiastically by roundtable participants. Of the 132 comments recorded about the Big Move, 81 were positive. 51 were positive in a general sense and 30 were positive about a specific project.
“I like the Dundas Street project. It should be faster. It will impact on myself, my family and the region.” – Oakville roundtable participant

“In terms of interconnectivity between different park of the region, still use car. But would still consider using the Hurontario - Main LRT depending on cost and if the car is needed at work.” – Cooksville roundtable participant

“Hwy 7 BRT will be a benefit as a first step.” – Richmond Hill roundtable participant

“Yonge North [subway extension] really affects. Driving is stressful because of congestion. Excited about this Yonge North expansion.” – Toronto roundtable participant

“Should focus on urgent needs: commuters' needs and airport.” – Scarborough roundtable participant

At the same time, we recorded 17 comments expressing concerns about increased costs. In Ajax, Brampton and Hamilton, Oakville and Scarborough we also recorded concerns that projects planned as part of the Big Move will not meet local needs.

“What about Durham Region? We need investment. Durham has been ignored. There's no companies coming to Ajax because it takes too long to get anywhere. Need more highway.” – Ajax roundtable participant

“Where is the Big Move, there weren’t no incentives to change the transportation means to move freely. 25% of cars from the road will alleviate congestion.” – Brampton roundtable participant
“Huge need for north-south connections. Eg. connection to Dundas, Stoney Creek. East-west is okay already.” – Hamilton roundtable participant

“Plan does not reflect enough changes or development for the Halton area.” – Oakville roundtable participant

“Ground level LRT = more congestion on Sheppard East... It doesn't free up street.” - Scarborough roundtable participant
c. Funding principles and finances

Participants were asked to consider the following questions:

- Funding The Big Move will cost $2 billion a year. This money will need to come from a variety of sources. Which of the following principles do you agree are most important to consider when proposing new sources of funding?
  - Dedication of revenue
  - Fairness in distributing costs among citizens, users, and beneficiaries
  - Equality among regional contributions and benefits
  - Transparency

Are there other principles to consider (e.g., predictability, expandability, social equity, user pay)?

- Which revenue tools best reflect the principles that you think are the most important for choosing how to pay for the next wave of Big Move projects?

- What kind of guarantees or assurances would you want to receive in order to feel good about supporting The Big Move?

We recorded 115 individual comments on this theme, 33 related to the principles and 82 on specific funding tools.
We found that the principle of fairness resonated most with them. Moreover, many participants highlighted economic inequality in society, and suggested that those with greater means should contribute more to the Big Move.

“Less privileged people do need to pay, but they should pay less.” – Hamilton roundtable participant

“Metrolinx needs to take into account -”If you earn more, pay more”.” – Malton roundtable participant

Comments coded as “other” reflect in part, a lively debate about whether drivers should contribute to transit expansion. Where some participants said that drivers should pay more and be thereby discouraged, others felt that transit users should cover the costs of expansion.

There were relatively few comments made in support of any of the revenue tools put forward for consideration by Metrolinx. Out of 66 comments made about specific tools, highway tolls received the most support with ten supportive comments, followed by cordon charges with six supportive comments, and vehicle kilometres travelled fees with five.

12 comments were made in favour of taxes, fees or other contributions from businesses, while 22 comments (coded as “other”) included suggestions of other means to raise funds or to cut costs.

“Should tax the indirect beneficiaries, eg. business that benefit from LRT / BRT.” – Cooksville roundtable participant.

“Business that need employees to get to their jobs should be putting in”. – Malton roundtable participant.

“Corporations should be giving back to the community.” – Oakville roundtable participant

“There should be a tax penalty for companies that require high number of employees to commute. This would encourage carpooling, remote workstations and other measures that take cars off the roads.” – Malton roundtable participant

“Everyone should pay a transit fee per family like the education fee in China, which supports the free public schools. But should we get free public transit then?” – Richmond Hill roundtable participant

“In my country, there are almost no taxes. But families that have a second car pay a tax. The tax has improved congestion and people support it.” – Oakville roundtable participant
d. Benefits to your community and the region

Participants were asked to discuss these questions:

- What Big Move projects will have the biggest impact on how you get around in your work and personal life?

- How important is it to ensure that all residents of the GTHA benefit more or less equally from the transportation expansions outlined in The Big Move? Or should more resources be directed to some areas or groups (e.g., priority neighbourhoods, areas with fewer transportation options)?

- What other specific benefits do you want to see from the Big Move projects (e.g., employing people from your community, information in different languages, local parking revenues going to improve neighbourhood streets)?

Roundtable participants made many positive comments about the impact of the Big Move on themselves, their families, and their community overall. Decreased congestion, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions were some of the benefits named, as were economic development and employment opportunities.

- “$$ economy benefits. Big Move offers jobs.” – Cooksville roundtable participant
- “More people would come and stay because of community, growing industry, work.” – Hamilton roundtable participant
- “This will impact on me more with taxes, but I hope it will make clients happier. It will release the congestion and speed up the highway. Easier and less frustrating.” – Oakville roundtable participant
- “In London we pay extra tax [for public transit] but it’s worth it!” – Richmond Hill participant
- “It’s a dream to bring all the systems together.” – Richmond Hill participant
- “We have to think about future generations.” – Scarborough roundtable participant

There were also several comments recorded about the positive aspects about using public transportation in general – that public transit is cheaper and more accessible than owning and operating a private car, particularly for youth and seniors. Public transit can also make travel a more social experience that is less stressful.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Participant Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Working and middle class people use public transit.”</td>
<td>Hamilton roundtable participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I like to take the bus; I feel independent. So I support the subway and other sorts of public transit. Will like to have faster service.”</td>
<td>Malton roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“For students it will make a big difference. They are the ones that commute the most.”</td>
<td>Malton roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who care about their health and safety can take bus - better than driving.”</td>
<td>Richmond Hill roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Financial reward. Car is expensive. Transportation option is good economically.”</td>
<td>Toronto roundtable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Everyone takes the same GO Train - you can get to know each other.”</td>
<td>Toronto roundtable participant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5. DOCUMENTATION

The following documents and data are provided to Metrolinx electronically, with this report.

- Registration Form
- Feedback Form
- Flyer (Malton)
- Brochure (simplified Chinese)
- Brochure (traditional Chinese)
- COTM – Registration Form data (personal information omitted for privacy)
- COTM – Feedback Form data
- COTM – Names and E-mail Addresses (provided by participants on understanding that this information would be passed on to Metrolinx)
- COTM – Facilitator notes
- COTM – Video
6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the agencies which hosted the Communities on the Move roundtables and to the municipalities, transit agencies and community organizations which otherwise supported this project.

LOCAL HOSTS

Community Development Council Durham
CultureLink Settlement Services
Halton Multicultural Council
Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion
Malton Neighbourhood Services
Masumeen Islamic Centre
City of Mississauga
St. Paul’s L’Amoreaux Centre
Welcome Centre Richmond Hill

MUNICIPALITIES AND TRANSIT AGENCIES

Town of Ajax
Brampton Transit
City of Hamilton
City of Mississauga
MiWay
Oakville Transit
Region of Peel
Walk and Roll Peel

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Chinese-Canadian National Council – Toronto chapter
Cycle Toronto
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Project Co-ordinator: Kristin Schwartz

Project Consultant: Vivien Leong

Facilitation Team: Linda Chavez, Angel Chen, Maria Gintova, Sherif Kinawy, Vivien Leong, Azfar Rizvi, Kristin Schwartz, Andrea Toth

Outreach Team, Chinese Health Information Forum: Angel Chen, Lynda Young

Artwork: Angel Chen

Video Production: Azfar Rizvi