

The Better Way: Transit Service and Demand in Metropolitan Toronto, 1953-1990

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Abstract

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This dissertation contends that the decision of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission to introduce a grid of frequent, all-day bus service on arterial roads in newly built, low-density suburban neighbourhoods is responsible for Toronto's unique ability to attract suburbanites to transit. Toronto's approach is in stark contrast with that followed in most North American urban regions, where auto-oriented suburban built form is considered to make transit unviable, and therefore transit service outside the urban core is typically very limited. The Ontario government's establishment of metropolitan government in the Toronto region in 1953, at a time when transit remained a popular mode of transportation, encouraged and empowered suburban politicians to pressure the TTC to expand service to their constituencies. In response, the TTC developed a plan for suburban bus service that succeeded, in terms of ridership and financial performance, far beyond its expectations. This success, in turn, encouraged further service improvements and government support for transit, producing a virtuous spiral of service increases, ridership gains, and government funding increases, which stood in sharp contrast with the vicious spiral of ridership declines, service cuts, and fare hikes that plagued transit systems in most North American cities. This dissertation is the product of archival research in Canada and the United States, as well as a series of interviews with policymakers, planners, and activists who were engaged during the period. The Toronto model offers valuable lessons for transportation planning across North America. It demonstrates that it is possible to achieve high transit mode share, even in areas that are not designed as explicitly transit-oriented communities. This means that it is

possible to shift trips away from the automobile without needing to entirely rebuild the suburban neighbourhoods where most North Americans reside, an unachievable goal on the timeline required to avert catastrophic climate change. It also demonstrates that the benefits of large capital investments in rapid transit and rail projects will only be maximized when paired with operating funding to ensure that the new infrastructure is embedded in a broader network of frequent local transit service.

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Dedication

To my late mother, Hilde English, with boundless appreciation.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

As veterans returned from the maelstrom of the Second World War, their governments vowed to ensure that the promises of “homes fit for heroes” from after the previous Great War were not seen to be broken again. Billions of federal dollars flowed over the following years—in the United States and in Canada—to innumerable programs that subsidized suburban housing and the highways needed to make it accessible. In the United States, racial prejudice ensured that the boon was not universal, but for millions of Americans and Canadians, it was possible, for the first time, to achieve the long-cherished dream of a house with a yard. Public transportation was one of the most important casualties of this revolution: from 1950 to 1970, U.S. annual per capita transit ridership plummeted by more than two-thirds.¹ Canadian cities underwent a similar physical transformation. They also built sprawling suburbs and urban expressways,² and from 1952 to 1962, Toronto’s transit ridership declined by 37.6%—comparable to 38.8% in Chicago, 40.3% in Washington, and 41.0% in Philadelphia.³

Almost uniquely, however, Toronto was able to reverse the trend, and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) was the only system in North America⁴ to increase ridership between 1946 and 1970.⁵ As ridership in American cities continued a precipitous decline,

¹ Paul Schimek, “Automobile and Public Transit Use in the United States and Canada: Comparison of Postwar Trends,” *Transportation Research Record* 1521, no. 1 (January 1996): 9.

² Craig Townsend and Margaret Ellis-Young, “Urban Population Density and Freeways in North America: A Re-Assessment,” *Journal of Transport Geography* 73 (2018): 75–83.

³ Simpson & Curtin Consultants and Joe R. Ong, “Economic Study of Bloor-Danforth Subway and Proposed Extensions” (The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, September 1963), 35.

⁴ For the purposes of this study, “North America” will be used as shorthand for the United States and Canada.

⁵ Michael J. Doucet, “Mass Transit and the Failure of Private Ownership: The Case of Toronto in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Urban History Review* 6, no. 3 (February 1, 1978): 380.

Toronto managed to slowly, and then rapidly, build ridership. More significantly, the gains were centred in the very auto-oriented suburbia that had ostensibly doomed transit. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the turnaround occurred in 1962 and 1963. The key event in those years was not a subway expansion or other large capital project; it was an expansion of the TTC's bus service, subsidized by the metropolitan government in a political compromise with suburban elected officials, to create a grid of routes along the old concession roads that had become the arterial backbone of the fast-growing new suburbs. Against predictions, the public took to the new services with alacrity. The upshot was a transit system that, to this day, maintains among the highest ridership per capita, at by far the lowest subsidy, of any transit system on the continent. More fundamentally, it has resulted in a city where even those who cannot afford a car or who are not able to drive nevertheless have access to the services and opportunities of their city.

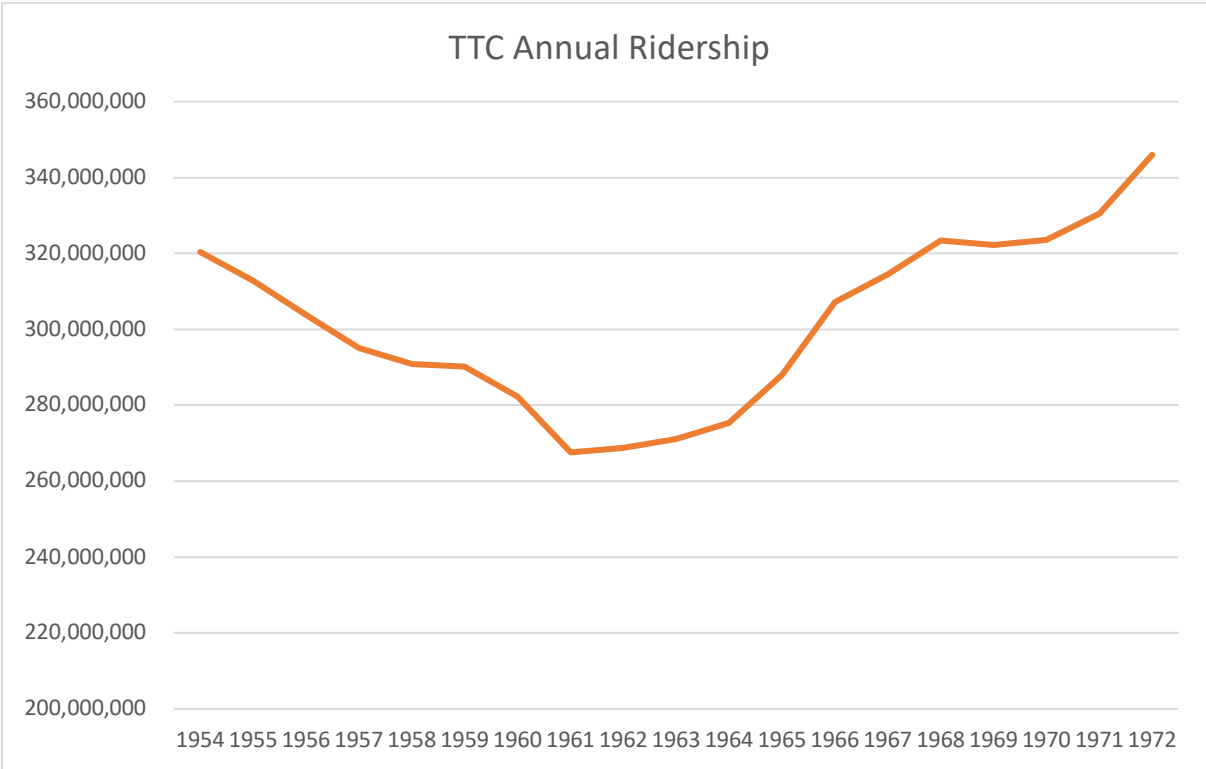


Figure 1: TTC Annual Ridership

While virtually every American city at the time was providing little or no transit service in those kinds of new neighbourhoods, people moving into new suburban houses in Metropolitan Toronto found a frequent bus down the block as soon as they arrived. This was far less impressive than the huge administrative and engineering achievements of San Francisco's BART and Washington's Metro, but in the end, it attracted more riders.

How did this happen? It happened because Toronto had a metropolitan government in the 1950s, which was able to take over the transit system while it was still strong and popular, and while the downtown core was still the centre of civic life. In most American cities, transit remained in private hands in those years. Instead of subsidy being used to maintain a consistent system, they descended into spirals of fare hikes, ridership declines, and service cuts that drove riders away. Even in places, like New York, where transit was publicly owned, it remained limited to the slow-growing central city, and completely ignored the booming suburbs for decades. Worse, opposition to transit became inextricably linked in many American cities to outright racism, since it was seen as a way for black people living in historic central cities to travel to the segregated suburbs.

Toronto's transit success was, to some extent, a product of its particular circumstances: a strong provincial government, an economic base favouring urban centralization, and some strong individual leadership. Nevertheless, the ability of Toronto to attract large numbers of transit riders in otherwise unexceptional suburbs offers some important lessons to other parts of the continent.

There are three objectives for this dissertation. Firstly, it seeks to examine a place where transit genuinely succeeded in postwar suburbia, and to determine how that situation came about. It is about challenging transit fatalism—the assumption that transit

cannot possibly be economically viable or attract substantial mode share in the neighbourhoods with single-family homes and two car garages that are home to the majority of the continent's population. It is about finding ways to make transit function in the neighbourhoods that exist now, rather than waiting for them to be entirely rebuilt—something that will take far longer than the time available to address the crisis of climate change in which auto dependence plays such a large role.

This builds on the work of scholars like Paul Mees to address the problems of imbalance between capital and operating funding for transit. Generally, governments have placed emphasis on the former. It also addresses the frequently discussed last mile problem. It is impossible to build rail transit within walking distance of everyone (or even most people) in a metropolitan area. There has been much discussion of new technology solutions that may be able to address the last mile issue, but this is an example of a very proven and very successful solution to that problem.

The dissertation places Toronto within a wider North American context through comparison with other successful transit systems, highlighting the particular success of simple investments in suburban buses, an area that is all too often dismissed as financially unviable. In so many regions, buses have low ridership, and that low ridership is in turn used to justify very limited service. This dissertation makes the case that that limited service may well be the primary cause of the low ridership. Because of its high ridership in the suburbs, Toronto has the lowest percentage subsidy of any transit system in North America. An agency seemingly maximizing its efficiency may in fact be hindering it by minimizing service, since running even an infrequent bus that is mostly empty is not very efficient. In Toronto, suburban buses that come every five minutes are still packed, since the service they offer is so attractive. It is only by changing the ideas of agency officials

and political leaders about how to run a transit system efficiently and equitably will transit be able to escape the trap of low service and low ridership.

Secondly, this dissertation aims to challenge the conventional wisdom within the Toronto area about the history of the local transit system. For example, this will challenge the widely held beliefs that expansion to the suburbs was disastrous for the TTC, and that a fare policy that attracted suburban riders forced the TTC into a spiral of deficits—not to mention challenging the idea that subsidy for transit is inherently a negative given the ample subsidy for other modes of transportation. Most fundamentally it challenges the timing of Toronto's transit success, shifting it from the defeat of the Spadina expressway in the early 1970s to the early 1960s, following the expansion of suburban bus service, when the turnaround in ridership actually occurred. It will place local bus service at the heart of the Toronto transit story, rather than in the marginal position that it has always held, as any examination of major planning documents will show.

Thirdly, this dissertation aims to provide a genuine history of the postwar TTC within a North American context, highlighting its unique characteristics and their political and administrative genesis.

Australian scholar Paul Mees has described a theory of transit planning, drawing in part on the Toronto model. He exalted the value of a grid of frequent transit service, enabling riders to transfer from one route to another so that they can travel to any part of the urban area—in stark contrast to the predominantly radial networks that exist in most North American cities. This “network effect,” as Mees describes it, is enabled by sufficiently high frequency of service that enables riders to transfer reliably and conveniently. The deterrent effect of infrequent service is multiplied when riders must

transfer: while they can time when they get on the first bus, an infrequent and poorly timed connection could leave them standing for a half-hour or more on a suburban street corner. Worse, if their first bus is delayed and they miss their connection, an infrequent route could force them to wait an unreasonably long time for the next trip. This requires riders to budget far more time than the actual travel time in order to ensure that they arrive punctually at their destination, badly hindering transit in competition with the automobile. As this dissertation will demonstrate, Toronto exemplifies Mees' network approach to transit planning.⁶

Mees describes other advantages of the network effect. For example, rather than forcing planners to predict where riders want to travel and then provide that service in advance, a comprehensive grid allows riders to vote with their feet, showing planners exactly where they want to go and therefore justifying further improvement to service where needed. Further conclusions can be drawn on the positive effects on multimodality: frequent bus service can connect to frequent rail service, enabling the latter to serve as a rapid, high-capacity backbone of a network while the former serves the "last mile" function of delivering riders to their homes.

This stands in stark contrast with many North American metropolitan cities, where rapid transit networks operate almost in isolation from the remaining bus network, leaving it useful only to those within walking distance or who can drive to park-and-ride facilities. In too many cases, rather than as an access route to rail service, the buses function as a parallel system that is used primarily by those who cannot afford high rail

⁶ Paul Mees, *Transport for Suburbia: Beyond the Automobile Age* (London: Routledge, 2009), 147–63.

fares. In Nassau County, a suburb of New York City, the busiest bus route runs directly parallel to the faster but much more expensive Long Island Rail Road.

It is necessary to define the metrics by which the success or failure of public transit is measured. In transit research, outcomes have generally been expressed as “modal splits” (e.g., shares of trips by automobile), daily passenger miles or hours of travel, and daily vehicle trip rates.⁷ For the purpose of this dissertation, and for comparison of Toronto with peer cities, success will focus on ridership growth rates and transit mode share.

By any measure, Toronto is no transit utopia. It does not have the regional transit ubiquity present in many Asian and European cities. Buses are often slow and unreliable, and even the busiest operate in mixed traffic and lack any kind of priority over cars. The TTC slipped badly in the 1990s, succumbing to the effects of a grievous recession and government funding cuts. These cuts put the agency into a spiral of fare hikes, service cuts, and ridership declines similar to those that had plagued transit operators across North America in the 1950s and 60s, but that the TTC had theretofore managed to avoid. Before then, however, the TTC had been seen as a model around the world. The Toronto model was studied by academics,⁸ and the TTC even offered consulting services that evangelized its model to transit agencies across North America.

⁷ Reid Ewing and Robert Cervero, “Travel and the Built Environment: A Synthesis,” *Transportation Research Record* 1780, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 87–114.

⁸ Paul Mees, *A Very Public Solution: Transport in the Dispersed City* (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Mees, *Transport for Suburbia*; Paul Mees, “Toronto: Paradigm Reexamined,” *Urban Policy and Research* 12, no. 3 (1994): 146–63; Robert Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis: A Global Inquiry*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C: Island Press, 1998), 83–90; Jeff Kenworthy and Peter Newman, “Toronto—Paradigm Regained,” *Australian Planner* 31, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 137–47; Peter W.G. Newman and Jeffrey R. Kenworthy, “The Land Use—Transport Connection: An Overview,” *Land Use Policy* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 1–22.

There is no lack of explanations for Toronto's unusual transit success. Renowned UC Berkeley transit scholar Robert Cervero largely puts it down to comprehensive land use planning enabled by a metropolitan government, which secured a strong central business district and concentrated development around subway stations. He also notes the power of the downtown-oriented urban reform movement, notably including Jane Jacobs, which stopped expressway construction in the city.⁹

An article by Australian scholars Peter Newman and Jeff Kenworthy captures the conventional view of Toronto's transit success, citing former mayor Art Eggleton:

“The city authorities were very influenced by the author Jane Jacobs, whose wonderful book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* stressed the need for people to go back to a more urban character and to rediscover the public spaces. She went to live in Toronto and was very influential in a movement there to stop the building of a major freeway called the Spadina Expressway (they built the Spadina subway line instead). From this experience a whole public, community-based move for a different kind of city sprang up. Once the freeway issue had defined the city's direction, the authorities decided to emphasize transit-oriented development in their planning priorities. Toronto changed in 20 years quite dramatically from a city that was becoming increasingly car based to one that is now substantially based around a transit network. As a result, it has been able to revitalize the downtown area and develop a series of transit-centred sub-cities. In addition, Toronto has a strong 'Main Street' programme aimed at increasing the inner-city population and revitalizing light rail/tram streets by incorporating a large quantity of new shop-top housing and other infill residential development.”¹⁰

There is certainly considerable validity to this explanation—the Stop Spadina movement, of which Jane Jacobs was a key member, played a tremendous role in

⁹ Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 83–90.

¹⁰ Newman and Kenworthy, “The Land Use—Transport Connection,” 17.

changing the values of the city. Still, an examination of the timing of Toronto's transit revival shows that it came much earlier, when Jane Jacobs was still ensconced in Greenwich Village. Toronto broke away from the North American pack not in the 1970s, after the cancellation of Spadina, but in the 1960s. More precisely, the turnaround can be pinpointed to 1962 and 1963, immediately after a radical and unprecedented expansion of suburban transit service that created a grid of frequent bus routes within reach of nearly every new single-family house on a cul-de-sac.

The story of Toronto's transit success is not truly an urban one. While Toronto's choice to save its legacy downtown streetcar network was a powerful symbol and helped spark the revival of light rail as a modern transit mode across North America, transit in central Toronto isn't particularly exceptional in a continental context. Scholars of transit and transit history Brian Doucet and Michael Doucet have divided Toronto into two sections: the "Streetcar City" built before the Second World War, consisting of classic streetcar suburbs¹¹ made up of bustling shopping streets with intersecting residential streets of closely-packed houses; and the "Automobile City," made up of postwar houses on large lots on meandering single-use streets.¹² The Streetcar City has a transit mode share to work of 39.2%, a figure that is similar to Washington, D.C. at 38%, Boston at 33%, and San Francisco at 33%. Central Toronto is a transit city, but not exceptionally so—it is no Paris, with a transit mode share of 59%.¹³

¹¹ For more on this type of urban form, see Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹² Brian Doucet and Michael Doucet, *Streetcars and the Changing Geography of Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

¹³ Yonah Freemark, "Travel Mode Shares in the U.S.," *The Transport Politic* (blog), August 24, 2016, <https://www.thetransportpolitic.com/databook/travel-mode-shares-in-the-u-s/>; "La Ville de Paris," *Enquête Globale Transport: La Mobilité En Île-de-France* (Direction régionale et interdépartementale de l'Équipement et de

Where Toronto truly stands out is in the postwar suburbs served by the Toronto Transit Commission: in Doucet and Doucet's Automobile City, transit's mode share for work trips is barely any lower: 35.5%. Such a figure across a broad suburban area is virtually unprecedented in North America. Toronto's deserved reputation as a transit model does not rest on the charming streets of downtown, with bright red streetcars trundling past. Instead, it rests on the unusually high transit use in the rather conventional suburban neighbourhoods where most of the city's residents live.

And they *are* conventional: the auto-orientation of these suburbs is borne out in more mode share statistics. While 6% of Streetcar City residents cycle to work, and 16.5% walk, the figures are only 0.6% and 3.4% respectively in the Automobile City. While small interventions, like pedestrian paths that allow direct routes from winding cul-de-sacs out to bus stops on arterial roads, make it possible for people to walk to the bus stop, the urban design of these communities remains unquestionably auto-oriented. Still, a large percentage of the population—including many who could afford a car or even have one sitting in the driveway—ride the bus.

l'Aménagement d'Île-de-France, January 2013), http://www.dricia.ile-de-france.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Fiche_Paris_BD_cle5316c5.pdf.



Figure 2: Street View of Finch West¹⁴



Figure 3: Street View of Finch West¹⁵

¹⁴ Image Source: Google Earth

¹⁵ Image Source: Google Earth

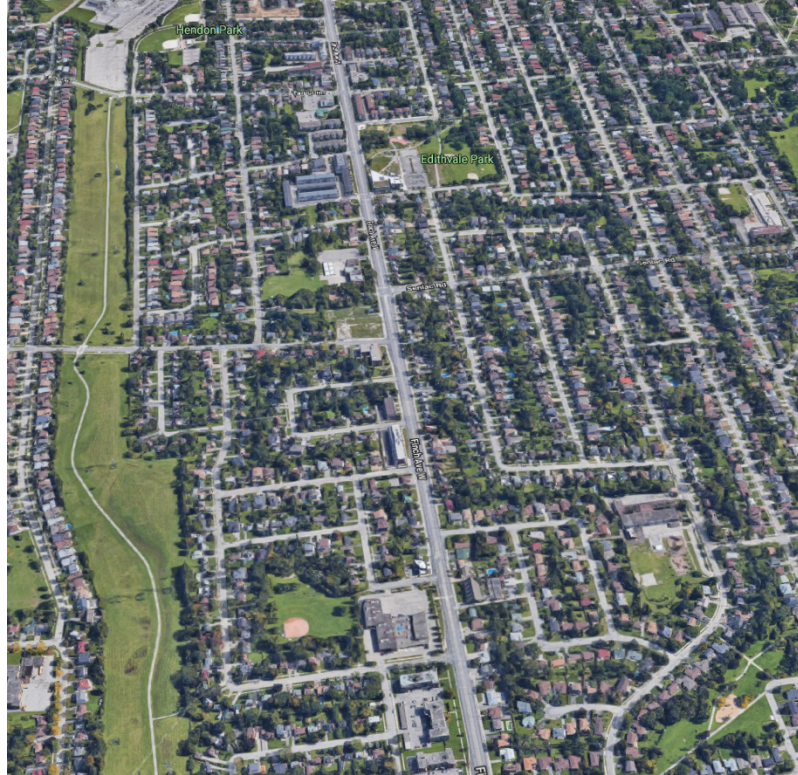


Figure 4: Aerial View of a Portion of Finch West¹⁶

The 36 Finch West, a bus route in the far northwest corner of the TTC’s service area, is an illustrative example. Though it serves a very suburban area with low-density and transit-unfriendly land use—predominantly strip malls and the backyard fences of houses, along with a few apartment buildings (see Figures 2, 3, and 4)—it carries 44,000 riders per day.¹⁷ The service frequency of the route is better than every ten minutes, all day, and the route runs 24 hours per day. Only one bus route in New York City matches this ridership figure, but it is not atypical for a suburban route in Toronto—several carry

¹⁶ Image Source: Google Earth

¹⁷ “Ridership and Cost Statistics for Bus and Streetcar Routes” (Toronto Transit Commission, 2012), https://www.ttc.ca/PDF/Transit_Planning/Ridership_cost_statistics_for_bus_streetcar_routes_2012.pdf.

even more riders.¹⁸ Finch West also requires a lower subsidy per rider than busy downtown streetcar routes: its operating cost is \$1.79 per rider, compared with \$2.46 on the 501 Queen streetcar.¹⁹ It isn't even the busiest suburban route. While Toronto's suburban bus routes are not particularly fast—Finch West averages about 15 km/h²⁰—nor do they have meaningful transit priority, their high frequency and daily operation late into the night has resulted in extraordinarily high ridership, which has in turn justified further service improvements.

The story of Toronto's suburban transit success remains largely untold. There is no comprehensive history of the postwar TTC, let alone one focusing on its unique suburban transit achievement. This dissertation aims to fill that gap, and to make a broader case for the provision of frequent transit service even in areas where high ridership seems unlikely due to the prevailing built form, as well as for higher levels of government to provide operating funding, and not just capital support, for local transit.

This dissertation is the product of archival research, principally at the City of Toronto Archives and the Archives of Ontario, as well as in several other archives. The document collections of both the Toronto Transit Commission and of the Chair of Metropolitan Toronto were consulted, in order to ascertain the internal discussion of policies in both the transit agency's professional administration, and within the senior political levels of the metropolitan government. Furthermore, newspaper archives were

¹⁸ "Average Weekday Bus Ridership" (MTA New York City Transit, n.d.), http://web.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/ridership_bus.htm.

¹⁹ "Ridership and Cost Statistics for Bus and Streetcar Routes."

²⁰ "Service Summary: May 12, 2019 to June 22, 2019" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, May 2019), https://www.ttc.ca/PDF/Transit_Planning/Service%20Summary_2019-05-12.pdf.

consulted extensively in order to understand the public discussion surrounding transportation policies, and to assess the level of public interest.

In addition to archival research, a series of interviews were conducted with policymakers, activists, and professionals who played significant roles in Metropolitan Toronto transportation policymaking in the period in question. They were used to gain greater insight into discussions that did not appear in the documents or in the newspaper, and also to secure a better understanding of the personalities involved. Interviews and documents were used as checks on one another.

Through this analysis of contemporary documents, it became increasingly clear that buses—and, in particular, improvements to conventional local bus service in the suburban parts of Metro—were the key to Metropolitan Toronto’s unique turnaround in the early 1960s. Comparison of transit policy initiatives and infrastructure improvements with the precise timing of ridership improvements clearly point to the bus improvements introduced in 1963 as the seminal moment—a moment even more important than the openings of major rail infrastructure.

Cities have always been shaped by their transportation. From the small, crowded pre-industrial city where walking was the primary means of getting around, to the early suburbs that began to disperse the middle-class population along streetcar and railroad lines, to the sprawl of the contemporary auto-oriented suburb—all are defined and limited by the availability of transportation. For centuries, transportation has been used to reduce the population density of cities, and to allow those with the financial means to afford it to escape to more bucolic surroundings on the urban fringe. The advent of mass automobile

ownership enabled dreams of universal dispersal of population, emptying out the tenement houses where the poor crowded to live close to their workplaces, and shifting to a world in which everyone had their own house and a plot of land.²¹

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright wrote of the concept of “Broadacre City” in 1932. Broadacre City was a misnomer, since it did not describe a city at all. Instead, it envisioned a United States in which each American family had their own one-acre plot of land, evenly distributed across the country. The booming automobile industry zealously embraced a diluted version of this vision, given its obvious pecuniary benefits to their businesses. It was popularized at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, where thousands of visitors rode a model created by designer Norman Bel Geddes. It is rare that one finds a past vision of the future that came true so precisely: its suburban houses on undulating streets, shopping centres, and expressway cloverleaves were to be the American landscape of the decades that followed.²²

Urban dispersal was an ideal with deep roots, partly stemming from fear of the urban mob in the French Revolution and countless tumults before it. Cities were also viewed as breeding grounds for vice and havens for immorality. As Thomas Jefferson said, “I view great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man.”²³ The atavism of the romantics led them, too, to pathologize the city. “Remove them from big

²¹ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Revised ed. edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987); Owen Gutfreund, *Twentieth-Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997); Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

²² Norman Bel Geddes, *Magic Motorways* (New York: Random House, 1940).

²³ Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, September 23, 1800, Founders Online, National Archives of the United States, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-32-02-0102>.

cities,” Rousseau wrote of young people. “Bring them back to their first abodes where rustic simplicity lets the passions of their age develop less rapidly.”²⁴ Later romantics were appalled by the dismal conditions of the smoke-filled, disease-afflicted, and poverty-ridden nineteenth century industrial city, and romantic nationalists furthermore associated the rural with the true soul of the nation. Writers like Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Emerson evangelized the rejection of the urban in the United States.

As eloquently as these voices may have expressed their disdain, returning to a pastoral society was an impossible dream at a time when the inexorable force of the industrial economy, with its factories requiring concentrated hordes of workers, increasingly supplanted the agricultural economy, with the inherently centrifugal force of its need for ample land. The only feasible means to transport those workers between home and work were either their own two feet, or streetcars and trains that moved riders *en masse*.²⁵ Wright saw the unique possibility presented by mass automobile ownership: each individual would, for the first time, have their own means of high-speed transportation that could take them to and from any places they pleased.

Yet cities endured through the tumult of the automobile age. Wright’s vision of a diffuse American population never came to pass. The cities of the automobile era may have been less densely populated and less centralized than the Dickensian industrial metropolis, but an inexorably growing proportion of the national population still lived and worked in the sprawling agglomerations that we call “metropolitan areas.” There is a rich economics literature exploring the reasons why people continue to concentrate in

²⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: Or, Treatise on Education* (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 205.

²⁵ Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 20–44.

cities: Alfred Marshall classified them as pooling of labour, sharing of inputs, and the spillover of knowledge.²⁶ There are equally significant cultural reasons for the existence of cities. Even as their dismal nature and deleterious effects were lamented by legions of great writers, these authors nonetheless tended to stay near their fellow writers (not to mention publishers and critics) in the big cities. More prosaically, many people appreciate the wide circle of friends, the cultural diversity, and the relative anonymity available in cities.

Without the availability of efficient means of transportation, however, the great city becomes an impossibility. From the invention of the train and streetcar, the city began to spread beyond walking distance. This transportation revolution brought tremendous benefits—for one, many people were no longer forced to crowd into tenements five-to-a-room to be within walking distance of their employment—but it also brought more problems: how could equitable access to transportation be guaranteed to all citizens?

Economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum have propounded the Capability Approach, which argues that capabilities—what people are able to do and to be—are fundamental to their quality of life. As Sen describes, “The capability approach to a person’s advantage is concerned with evaluating it in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functionings as a part of living.”²⁷

²⁶ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 8th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1920); For a review of the literature, see Stuart S. Rosenthal and William C. Strange, “Evidence on the Nature and Sources of Agglomeration Economies,” in *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics*, ed. J. Vernon Henderson and Jacques-François Thisse, vol. 4, Cities and Geography (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004), 2119–71; See also Paul Krugman, “Increasing Returns and Economic Geography,” *Journal of Political Economy* 99, no. 3 (June 1, 1991): 483–99; Edward L. Glaeser et al., “Growth in Cities,” *Journal of Political Economy* 100, no. 6 (December 1, 1992): 1126–52.

²⁷ Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice,” *Feminist Economics* 9, no. 2–3 (January 1, 2003): 33–59; Amartya Sen, “Capability and Well-Being,” in *The Quality of Life*, by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31.

In an urban civilization, the vast majority of these essential “functionings” are found outside the home—whether they be food, employment, health care, culture, or education. In a large city, especially one built during the era of the automobile, most of those will be located well beyond walking distance for most people. As Schaeffer and Sclar have described, this leaves those unable to drive or to afford an automobile severely limited in their access to services and opportunities. While mobility may be increased by widespread automobile use, it may just result in driving further to reach the same services and opportunities, while those without cars are left out entirely.²⁸

The focus on needs beyond employment is equally essential. Many transit services, such as most North American commuter rail systems, are geared entirely to white collar workers, and encourage—if not require—car ownership due to their park-and-ride-oriented networks. This type of service is basically unusable for the many types of trips that do not operate on a 9-to-5 schedule—e.g., shift work, caring for children and relatives, visiting friends, shopping, or obtaining health care. Transit with little or no off-peak service does little for a person trying to get to a 1 pm doctor’s appointment.

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls outlined the “original position,” a situation in which people choose the values and institutions that they prefer for their society from behind a “veil of ignorance,” which prevents them from knowing their own characteristics, such as race, gender, class, or ability. Without knowing whether one is to be advantaged in those respects, one would naturally choose a system that provides justice as universally as possible.²⁹ A similar original position can be applied to urban transportation. A person

²⁸ K.H. Schaeffer and Elliott Sclar, *Access for All: Transportation and Urban Growth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Elliott D. Sclar, Måns Lönnroth, and Christian Wolmar, *Urban Access for the 21st Century: Finance and Governance Models for Transport Infrastructure* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

²⁹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

who does not know their socioeconomic characteristics, whether they will be able to drive, or, crucially, whether they will live or work in the dense city centre or a more dispersed suburb, will not choose the most “efficient” public transit system—one only providing good service to a small proportion of the population in the densest part of the city that can be served at the lowest possible cost. They will choose a system that provides universal coverage. This is of vital importance because, increasingly, location within the metropolitan area is not a choice that is available to the individual. Dense prewar neighbourhoods are increasingly unaffordable, while jobs in many sectors may only be located in low-density suburban areas.

An emerging group of scholars, aligned with the “Right to the City” movement, has argued that public transportation itself must be recognized as a universal right.³⁰ Kafui Attoh used the case of California’s East Bay, where a movement has arisen to demand that right, and argues that such a demand requires the recognition of its multifaceted aspects. It is a civil right, including for protection against discrimination, and also a welfare right, necessitating an approach to government transportation finance that emphasizes public over private transportation.³¹

The severe limitations of transit in many parts of the United States, particularly those built after the age of the automobile, force even the poorest residents to spend their scarce resources on buying, operating, and maintaining a car. In 2001, three quarters of households with an income below \$20,000 per year owned a car; the figure for all

³⁰ Kafui Ablode Attoh, *Rights in Transit: Public Transportation and the Right to the City in California’s East Bay* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019); Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004); Thomas W. Sanchez et al., *The Right to Transportation: Moving to Equity* (Chicago: APA Planners Press, 2007).

³¹ Attoh, *Rights in Transit*.

households was over 91%.³² There is a growing literature on the increasing suburbanization of poverty, as gentrification prices low-income residents out of dense prewar neighbourhoods.³³ This process only exacerbates the socioeconomic consequences of limited suburban transit. King et al and Manville et al have found that a lack of access to an automobile closely correlates with economic disadvantage and unemployment.³⁴ Participation in the economy requires reliable transportation, and that can only be provided by the automobile in all-too-many parts of the United States—especially in suburbs that are outside the service area of the central city transit authority. It is therefore unsurprising that a growing number of low-income Americans are overextending themselves financially to purchase cars that they cannot afford.³⁵

³² J. Pucher and J. L. Renne, “Socioeconomics of Urban Travel: Evidence from the 2001 NHTS,” *Transportation Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2003), <https://trid.trb.org/view/662423>.

³³ Elizabeth Kneebone and Emily Garr, “The Suburbanization of Poverty: Trends in Metropolitan America, 2000 to 2008,” Metropolitan Opportunity Series (Brookings, January 2010); Kenya Covington, Lance Freeman, and Michael Stoll, “The Suburbanization of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients,” Metropolitan Opportunity Series (Washington: Brookings, October 2011), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-suburbanization-of-housing-choice-voucher-recipients/>; John David Hulchanski, “The Three Cities within Toronto: Income Polarization among Toronto’s Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005” (Toronto, Ont.: Cities Centre, University of Toronto, 2010), <http://www.deslibris.ca/ID/226176>; Steven Raphael and Michael A. Stoll, “Job Sprawl and the Suburbanization of Poverty,” Metropolitan Opportunity Series (Washington: Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, March 2010); Aaron J. Howell and Jeffrey M. Timberlake, “Racial and Ethnic Trends in the Suburbanization of Poverty in U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1980–2010,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2014): 79–98; Kenya L. Covington, “Poverty Suburbanization: Theoretical Insights and Empirical Analyses,” *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 2 (April 9, 2015): 71–90.

³⁴ David A. King, Michael J. Smart, and Michael Manville, “The Poverty of the Carless: Toward Universal Auto Access,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, February 1, 2019, 0739456X18823252; Michael Manville, David A. King, and Michael J. Smart, “The Driving Downturn: A Preliminary Assessment,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 83, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 42–55; Mizuki Kawabata and Qing Shen, “Commuting Inequality between Cars and Public Transit: The Case of the San Francisco Bay Area, 1990-2000.,” *Urban Studies* 44, no. 9 (July 2, 2016): 1759–1780; Jae Sik Jeon, Casey Dawkins, and Rolf Pendall, “How Vehicle Access Enables Low-Income Households to Live in Better Neighborhoods,” *Housing Policy Debate* 28, no. 6 (November 2, 2018): 920–39.

³⁵ King, Smart, and Manville, “The Poverty of the Carless”; Nicholas J. Klein and Michael J. Smart, “Millennials and Car Ownership: Less Money, Fewer Cars,” *Transport Policy* 53 (January 1, 2017): 20–29; Nicholas Klein, Minh Tran, and Sarah Riley, “‘Desperately in Need of a Car’: Analyzing Crowdfunding Campaigns for Car Purchases and Repairs on Gofundme.Com” (99th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board, Washington, 2020).

Others are turning to private solutions, like ride-hailing, which is adding to automobile traffic in many cities,³⁶ or to private jitneys, which supplement inadequate or unsuitable transit service in many immigrant communities.³⁷ These growing modes could generate another spiral of declining ridership, declining service, and increasing fares if transit service does not improve to compete.

The social and economic effects of automobility are compounded by the environmental and health effects. In many major cities, vehicle emissions are the predominant source of air pollutants, including volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, which are the key contributors to unhealthy air quality.³⁸ In the United States, cars and light trucks are responsible for 17.1% of total greenhouse gas emissions, or 4.79 metric tonnes per capita.³⁹ In Canada, they are only responsible for 13.1% of emissions, or 2.57 tons per capita.⁴⁰ More extensive use of public transportation in major Canadian metropolitan areas is likely responsible for a significant proportion of

³⁶ Bruce Schaller, “The New Automobility: Lyft, Uber and the Future of American Cities” (Brooklyn: Schaller Consulting, July 25, 2018), <http://www.schallerconsult.com/rideservices/automobility.pdf>.

³⁷ Eric Louis Goldwyn, “An Informal Transit System Hiding in Plain Sight: Brooklyn’s Dollar Vans and Transportation Planning and Policy in New York City” (Columbia University, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8W959RP>; Eric Goldwyn, “Anatomy of a New Dollar van Route: Informal Transport and Planning in New York City,” *Journal of Transport Geography*, September 10, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2018.08.019>.

³⁸ Kai Zhang and Stuart Batterman, “Air Pollution and Health Risks Due to Vehicle Traffic,” *The Science of the Total Environment* 450–451 (April 15, 2013): 307–16; Jonathan I. Levy, Jonathan J. Buonocore, and Katherine von Stackelberg, “Evaluation of the Public Health Impacts of Traffic Congestion: A Health Risk Assessment,” *Environmental Health* 9, no. 1 (October 27, 2010): 65.

³⁹ “Fast Facts: U.S. Transportation Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions, 1990–2017” (Office of Transportation and Air Quality, United States Environmental Protection Agency, June 2019), <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=P100WUHR.pdf>.

⁴⁰ “Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs)” (Natural Resources Canada, August 9, 2019), <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/science-data/data-analysis/energy-data-analysis/energy-facts/energy-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions-ghgs/20063>.

that divergence. Air pollution is only one of the many deleterious effects on health of an automobile-dependent transportation system.⁴¹

A variety of studies have sought to quantitatively assess the determinants of transit ridership, and all have found that service is a key determinant, albeit to varying degrees. The quality of transit service is affected by several distinct variables. The most obvious is frequency—how frequently a vehicle arrives at a stop. Other factors include span of service (i.e., the number of hours of the day with service) and the geographic coverage of routes (i.e., the percentage of the population within walking distance of a bus stop).

Studies have generally used vehicle-miles or vehicle revenue hours to measure service.⁴² This choice of metric is likely driven by its ease of collection—all transit systems publish data on vehicle-miles or revenue hours of service. Though it is a valid and easily comparable proxy for service, it has some limitations. For example, system-wide data does not capture variations in service at the route level; it also does not capture variations

⁴¹ Lawrence D. Frank, “Land Use and Transportation Interaction: Implications on Public Health and Quality of Life,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20, no. 1 (September 1, 2000): 6–22; James F. Sallis et al., “An Ecological Approach to Creating Active Living Communities,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 27, no. 1 (2006): 297–322; Lawrence D. Frank et al., “Many Pathways from Land Use to Health: Associations between Neighborhood Walkability and Active Transportation, Body Mass Index, and Air Quality,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 72, no. 1 (March 31, 2006): 75–87; Howard Frumkin, “Urban Sprawl and Public Health,” *Public Health Reports* 117, no. 3 (May 1, 2002): 201–17; Mary E. Northridge, Elliot D. Sclar, and Padmini Biswas, “Sorting out the Connections between the Built Environment and Health: A Conceptual Framework for Navigating Pathways and Planning Healthy Cities,” *Journal of Urban Health* 80, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 556–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/jtg064>; Brian E. Saelens, James F. Sallis, and Lawrence D. Frank, “Environmental Correlates of Walking and Cycling: Findings from the Transportation, Urban Design, and Planning Literatures,” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 25, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 80–91; Ann Y. Watson, Richard R. Bates, and Donald Kennedy, eds., *Air Pollution, the Automobile, and Public Health* (Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US), 1988), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK218150/>.

⁴² Graham Currie and Ian Wallis, “Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence,” *Journal of Transport Geography*, Growing Public Transport Patronage, 16, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 419–29; Brian D. Taylor et al., “Nature and/or Nurture? Analyzing the Determinants of Transit Ridership across US Urbanized Areas,” *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 60–77; John F. Kain and Zvi Liu, “Secrets of Success: Assessing the Large Increases in Transit Ridership Achieved by Houston and San Diego Transit Providers,” *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 33, no. 7 (September 1, 1999): 601–24; Jose A. Gomez-Ibanez, “Big-City Transit Ridership, Deficits, and Politics: Avoiding Reality in Boston,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 62, no. 1 (March 31, 1996): 30–50.

in service over the course of a day, such as a route with high levels of rush-hour service but a limited span of service. Some other studies have also used fleet size, which is a less reliable proxy, since some systems may use their vehicles far less intensively than others.⁴³

Currie and Wallis conducted a meta-analysis of effective ways to grow urban bus markets. They drew on research that was primarily conducted in Australia, Europe, and the United Kingdom—all places with a higher typical level of transit service than the United States. They grouped the three main methods of attracting ridership as fares, service levels, and in-vehicle time (or average speed of service), and estimated short-term elasticities. At 0.40, the elasticity for fare reductions was the highest, though potential ridership gains were inherently limited to 40% since fares cannot drop below zero. Service levels and in-vehicle time were not far behind at 0.35 and 0.30, respectively, and the former had far higher potential for growth—over 200%, they suggested. Long-run elasticities were roughly double, an unsurprising finding since ridership is likely to build slowly as people discover the service, choose not to replace their cars, delay obtaining a driver’s license as they come of age at a time of more usable transit service, et cetera.⁴⁴

Balcombe et al found the elasticity of bus demand with respect to vehicle-kilometres to be approximately 0.4 in the short run and 0.7 in the long run.⁴⁵ Boisjoly et al found that a 10% increase in VRK is associated with an 8.27% increase in ridership.⁴⁶

⁴³ M. S. McLeod et al., “Multivariate Time-Series Model of Transit Ridership Based on Historical, Aggregate Data: The Past, Present and Future of Honolulu,” no. 1297 (1991): 76–84.

⁴⁴ Currie and Wallis, “Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence.”

⁴⁵ R. Balcombe et al., “The Demand for Public Transport: A Practical Guide,” Report (London, UK: Transportation Research Laboratory, 2004), 19, <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1349/>.

⁴⁶ Geneviève Boisjoly et al., “Invest in the Ride: A 14 year Longitudinal Analysis of the Determinants of Public Transport Ridership in 25 North American Cities,” *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 116 (October 1, 2018): 434–45.

The difference may be attributed to the focus of Currie and Wallis and Balcombe et al on non-North American locations, where the base level of transit service is higher and improvements have reached the point of diminishing returns.

A 2000 survey of international bus planning experts found that they viewed frequency as by far the most important way to grow bus ridership, with transit priority measures to improve reliability coming second. Other factors, like increased coverage, reduced fares, and network integration were all cited far less frequently as a top priority.⁴⁷ Other studies have also emphasized the importance of reliability—a factor that is compounded by low scheduled frequency.⁴⁸ By contrast, Currie and Wallis found that the improvements to on-board comfort that are so popular among transit administrators and political leaders, such as the USB chargers introduced at the behest of New York governor Andrew Cuomo on some New York City buses, are likely to affect ridership by only about three to four percent.⁴⁹ Chen et al also found that gas prices, often cited in popular press as an important factor of driving people to or from transit riding, have only a marginal effect.⁵⁰

Quantitative analyses based on vehicle-miles travelled do not capture the effects of service improvements at various step changes, such as when a route shifts to a clock-face schedule, when a service improvement enables smooth connections between routes, or when a route shifts from rush-hour-only to all-day service. Nor can they capture the effect

⁴⁷ Currie and Wallis, “Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence.”

⁴⁸ John Bates et al., “The Valuation of Reliability for Personal Travel,” *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review* 37, no. 2 (2001): 191–229; Robert B. Noland and John W. Polak, “Travel Time Variability: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Issues,” *Transport Reviews* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 39–54.

⁴⁹ Currie and Wallis, “Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence.”

⁵⁰ Cynthia Chen, Don Varley, and Jason Chen, “What Affects Transit Ridership? A Dynamic Analysis Involving Multiple Factors, Lags and Asymmetric Behaviour,” *Urban Studies* 48, no. 9 (November 17, 2010): 1893–1908.

on public perception of transit that well-publicized service improvements can obtain. For example, the King Street Pilot program in Toronto gave priority to streetcars on a downtown segment of a busy streetcar route, receiving widespread publicity in part owing to opposition from local businesses fearing loss of parking. Despite relatively modest improvements to travel time and reliability, daily weekday ridership grew by 16% in a year.⁵¹ Only a detailed qualitative analysis of an urban region where such service improvements have taken place can reveal these effects.

Other scholars have deemphasized the importance of service as a determinant of ridership. Taylor et al found that “external” factors, such as density, region of the country, income, population characteristics, and automobile ownership are more determinative of transit ridership than service. Even so, Taylor found that about 26% of variance in per capita ridership is explained by service frequency and fare levels.⁵² Economist Ian Savage conducted a quantitative historical study of transit, determining that American transit systems could improve social welfare by reducing frequency and using the savings to lower fares.⁵³ The example of Toronto belies this purported tradeoff, however. Boarnet et al conducted a quantitative analysis arguing that improving “last mile” access to transit stations is more important than transit service headways, although the study does not address the concept of local transit service providing the last mile access.⁵⁴

⁵¹ General Manager, Transportation Services, Chief Planner & Executive Director, City Planning, and Chief Customer Officer, Toronto Transit Commission, “The Future of King Street: Results of the Transit Pilot,” Report for Action (Toronto: City of Toronto Executive Committee, April 2, 2019), <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-131188.pdf>.

⁵² Taylor et al., “Nature and/or Nurture?”

⁵³ Ian Savage, “The Dynamics of Fare and Frequency Choice in Urban Transit,” *World Transit Research*, January 1, 2010, <http://www.worldtransitresearch.info/research/3661>.

⁵⁴ Marlon G. Boarnet et al., “First/Last Mile Transit Access as an Equity Planning Issue,” *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 103 (September 1, 2017): 296–310.

Critics of high modernist approaches to urban planning have increasingly recognized the virtues of dense, walkable, mixed-use communities resembling those of the prewar era. Ranging from Lewis Mumford, who criticized the consequences of exclusive reliance on automobiles, to Jane Jacobs, who rejected modernist planning altogether,⁵⁵ they challenged the dispersed suburban vision of Wright and Bel Geddes, which had been codified in and enabled by a postwar approach to planning that sought simply to predict travel demand and provide sufficient capacity to meet it.⁵⁶ Designers like Peter Calthorpe, Andres Duany, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk wrote of the need to develop new walkable communities with higher densities and traditional grid street layouts, which would enable residents and workers to walk easily to and from the transit station.⁵⁷ Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero refined this into proposals for "transit villages" around stations.⁵⁸

Land use has increasingly become an important area of transportation planning research. As Ewing and Cervero put it, "The potential to moderate travel demand by changing the built environment is the most heavily researched subject in urban planning."⁵⁹ In their review of research on travel and the built environment, they found that studies indicated that vehicle miles travelled were lower and transit mode share was

⁵⁵ Lewis Mumford, "The Highway and the City," *Architectural Record*, March 1958; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

⁵⁶ Alan Black, "The Chicago Area Transportation Study: A Case Study of Rational Planning," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 10, no. 1 (October 1, 1990): 27–37.

⁵⁷ Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993); Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2000); Peter Katz, *The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community*, 1 edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 1993).

⁵⁸ Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21st Century* (McGraw-Hill, 1997).

⁵⁹ Reid Ewing and Robert Cervero, "Travel and the Built Environment," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 76, no. 3 (June 21, 2010): 267.

higher in higher-density, mixed-use, traditional-style neighbourhoods than in postwar neighbourhoods with lower density and separation of uses. They concluded that “[m]ode choices depend on both the built environment and socioeconomics (although they probably depend more on the latter).”⁶⁰ Cervero and Kockelman, in one study of the San Francisco Bay Area, found that there were modest to moderate effects on trip rates and non-auto mode share from density, mixed land uses, and traditional street grid layout.⁶¹ Boarnet and Crane were more equivocal about the relationship between built form and land use,⁶² while Leck’s meta-analysis found that residential density affected travel behaviour but street layout did not.⁶³

Cervero and Radisch used the “matched pairs” method to contrast Rockridge, a neo-traditional neighbourhood in the Bay Area, with Lafayette, a nearby conventional suburb that otherwise had similar socioeconomic characteristics and transportation infrastructure. They found that Rockridge residents averaged about a 10-percentage-point higher share of non-work trips by non-automobile modes than Lafayette, even controlling for income and other factors. The divergence was highest for shopping trips. Mode-share among work trips was more similar, likely owing to the high quality of transit

⁶⁰ Ewing and Cervero, “Travel and the Built Environment,” January 1, 2001.

⁶¹ Robert Cervero and Kara Kockelman, “Travel Demand and the 3Ds: Density, Diversity, and Design,” *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 1997): 199–219.

⁶² Marlon Boarnet and Randall Crane, *Travel by Design: The Influence of Urban Form on Travel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Randall Crane, “The Influence of Urban Form on Travel: An Interpretive Review,” *Journal of Planning Literature* 15, no. 1 (August 2000).

⁶³ Eran Leck, “The Impact of Urban Form on Travel Behavior: A Meta-Analysis,” *Berkeley Planning Journal* 19, no. 1 (2006), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/20s78772>.

service available for work commutes to San Francisco and Berkeley from the BART rail stations in both communities.⁶⁴

Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey Zupan wrote the most comprehensive quantitative analysis of the relationship between population density and transit use in 1977. The authors focus on the relationship between density and transit use, but recognize that density throughout a region is not necessarily as important as density at certain points, particularly the central business district. They established the concept of appropriate density levels for types of transit service.⁶⁵

Cervero and Guerra, in a highly influential article, have argued that density around stations is the essential determinant for the success of suburban rail transit.⁶⁶ Their analysis assumes a catchment area of a half-mile around stations; other authors favour figures varying from a quarter-mile⁶⁷ to two-fifths of a mile,⁶⁸ while O’Sullivan and Morral⁶⁹ conducted a meta-analysis of transit agency guidelines that ranged from 300 to 900 metres. All of these assume that riders will walk to the rail stations, rather than taking a connecting bus, and that the rail transit infrastructure will therefore operate largely in isolation from the rest of the transit network.

⁶⁴ Robert Cervero and Carolyn Radisch, “Travel Choices in Pedestrian versus Automobile Oriented Neighborhoods,” *Transport Policy* 3, no. 3 (July 1, 1996): 127–41.

⁶⁵ Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey M. Zupan, *Public Transportation and Land Use Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

⁶⁶ Robert Cervero and Erick Guerra, “Urban Densities and Transit: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective” (Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley, September 2011).

⁶⁷ Fang Zhao et al., “Forecasting Transit Walk Accessibility: Regression Model Alternative to Buffer Method,” *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board* 1835 (January 1, 2003): 34–41.

⁶⁸ Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis*.

⁶⁹ S. O’Sullivan and J. Morral, “Walking Distances to and from Light-Rail Transit Stations,” *Transportation Research Record*, no. 1538 (1996), <https://trid.trb.org/view.aspx?id=469375>.

The academic research on the determinants of transit mode share or ridership is nuanced, suggesting that there are many elements at play, including land use, population density, street design, cultural factors, as well as transit service and fare. When this has been translated into standards and practices, however, it has all-too-often been reduced to a blunt density determinism.

A 2012 Ontario Ministry of Transportation report, intended to guide planning and the location of transit investment, defines a minimum density needed to sustain various modes of transit. 50 jobs and residents, or 22 dwelling units, per hectare is deemed the minimum required for a “basic” bus service every 20 to 30 minutes.⁷⁰ A similar figure of 20 units per hectare was cited in a document by the U.S. Environmental Protection Administration as necessary to support a “minimal” bus service.⁷¹ Similar figures have been used by academic researchers in the Toronto area.⁷² The standard is well above the density of parts of Toronto that are currently served by buses on headways of less than five minutes—including Finch West—which are among the busiest bus routes in North America. The conventional density of the city’s postwar suburbs was only about 16 units per hectare.⁷³ The guidelines set a minimum of 90 units (or 200 residents and jobs) per hectare for a subway. That is far above the density at nearly all suburban Toronto subway stations, even though many of them are busier than all but a handful of subway stations

⁷⁰ *Transit-Supportive Guidelines* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Transportation, 2012), 24.

⁷¹ “Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community” (Local Government Commission in cooperation with U.S. EPA, 2003), <https://archive.epa.gov/greenbuilding/web/pdf/density.pdf>.

⁷² Cherise Burda and Graham Haines, “Making Tracks to Torontonians: Building Transit Where We Need It” (Toronto: The Pembina Institute, January 2011), http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/toenviro/legacy_url/495/making-tracks-toronto.pdf?1419017830; Cherise Burda, Mike Collins-Williams, and Alicia Kingdon, “Suburbs on Track: Building Transit-Friendly Neighbourhoods Outside the Toronto Core” (Toronto: Ryerson City Building Institute, September 2016).

⁷³ *Urban Development Standards: A Demonstration of the Potential for Reducing Costs* (Toronto: Local Development Branch, Ontario Ministry of Housing, 1976), 47.

in dense Brooklyn, and even most stations in Manhattan. The standards only consider the density within walking distance of stations. In Toronto, however, most transit riders reach suburban stations on the frequent bus grid network developed in the 1960s. If such standards had been followed in the 1960s, the suburban bus service would never have been introduced, and the subway would never have been built outside the downtown core.

As there has been ample research on the effect of land use on transit, there has also been substantial examination of the effect of transit on land use and property development. This research, however, is overwhelmingly focused on higher-order transit—particularly rail,⁷⁴ although bus rapid transit has also been considered in some studies.⁷⁵ Most of the studies conclude that there is some effect on development, but many found that the effect was either small, depended on the region being studied, or that more research would be required to determine the scale of the effect. There is very little research, by contrast, examining the effects of frequent local bus service on development.

Filion et al argued that more dense development has occurred in Toronto than in most North American cities, but that much of Toronto’s population density is “wasted” from a transit perspective, since it is located at considerable distance from rail stations.

⁷⁴ David A. King and Lauren Ames Fischer, “Long Term Land Use Effects of New Rail Investment: Lessons from San Diego,” *Urban Science* 2, no. 1 (March 2018): 6; David A. King and Lauren Ames Fischer, “Streetcar Projects as Spatial Planning: A Shift in Transport Planning in the United States,” *Journal of Transport Geography* 54 (June 1, 2016): 383–90; Christopher Higgins, Mark Ferguson, and Pavlos Kanaroglou, “Light Rail and Land Use Change: Rail Transit’s Role in Reshaping and Revitalizing Cities,” *Journal of Public Transportation* 17, no. 2 (June 1, 2014), <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jpt/vol17/iss2/5>; Kenneth J. Dueker and Martha J. Bianco, “Light-Rail-Transit Impacts in Portland: The First Ten Years,” *Transportation Research Record* 1685, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 171–80; Richard J. Lee and Ipek N. Sener, “The Effect of Light Rail Transit on Land Use in a City without Zoning,” *Journal of Transport and Land Use* 10, no. 1 (2017): 541–56; Robert Cervero, “Journal Report: Light Rail Transit and Urban Development,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 50, no. 2 (June 30, 1984): 133–47; Qingyun Shen, “Under What Conditions Can Urban Rail Transit Induce Higher Density? Evidence from Four Metropolitan Areas in the United States, 1990-2010” (University of Michigan, 2013).

⁷⁵ Aiga Stokenberga, “Does Bus Rapid Transit Influence Urban Land Development and Property Values: A Review of the Literature,” *Transport Reviews* 34, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 276–96; Robert Cervero and Danielle Dai, “BRT TOD: Leveraging Transit Oriented Development with Bus Rapid Transit Investments,” *Transport Policy* 36 (November 1, 2014): 127–38.

While this is certainly an important observation, it is also worthwhile to note that some of the density that is distant from the rail network may have been facilitated by the availability of frequent local bus service. In their paper, the authors state that “‘quality’ public transit refers to services that are competitive with the automobile in terms of speed and comfort. They are generally services with frequent headways, using their own right of way. In Toronto the subway and the Scarborough rail transit correspond most closely to this definition.” While Toronto’s buses do not have their own right of way, they are very frequent and indeed as well-used as many rapid transit routes in other cities. Many of Toronto’s important clusters of apartment buildings are located at the intersection of frequent bus routes. Filion et al’s article includes a map that describes areas of high density and high transit use, as well as areas of high density and low transit use. Most of the latter are located in areas outside the TTC service area or exceptionally distant from the subway, while the former include several areas that are served only by frequent bus routes.⁷⁶

The transit planning literature’s focus on the planning of higher-order transit—particularly rail—and its relationship to land use is perhaps unsurprising since such large capital projects form such a predominant part of higher-level government spending on transit.⁷⁷ Still, there is a growing literature that has focused on the importance of basic local transit service at a usable frequency and span.

⁷⁶ Pierre Filion, Kathleen McSpurren, and Brad Appleby, “Wasted Density? The Impact of Toronto’s Residential-Density-Distribution Policies on Public-Transit Use and Walking,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38, no. 7 (July 1, 2006): 1367–92.

⁷⁷ Brian D. Taylor and Kelly Samples, “Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: Political Perceptions, Economic Reality, and Capital Bias in U.S. Transit Subsidy Policy,” *Public Works Management & Policy* 6, no. 4 (April 1, 2002): 250–63; Don H. Pickrell, “A Desire Named Streetcar: Fantasy and Fact in Rail Transit Planning,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58, no. 2 (June 30, 1992): 158–76; Daniel Baldwin Hess and Peter A. Lombardi, “Governmental Subsidies for Public Transit: History, Current Issues, and Recent Evidence,” *Public Works Management & Policy* 10, no. 8 (2005): 138–156; Martin Wachs and James Ortner, “Capital Grants and Recurrent Subsidies: A Dilemma

As early as 1972, economist Herbert Mohring argued that an increase in transit frequency would produce an increase in demand, since it would shorten waiting time for passengers. While transit generally experiences constant economies of scale, at least for buses, since a single operator is required to drive a bus no matter how large the fleet, Mohring argued that users' waiting time must also be taken into account as a cost. That means that transit is subject to increasing returns to scale since greater demand means more frequency, and therefore shorter waiting time.⁷⁸

Curiously, while Toronto's position in the North American literature on transit planning is marginal, it plays an important role in the Australian literature. The "Toronto model" has become a topic of significant debate in Australia, where it has been used as an object of comparison for cities in that country. While many Australian cities have extensive regional rail networks, the frequency of the service is often limited, and connections between rail and bus modes are often poor.⁷⁹

Partly using Toronto as a case, Paul Mees' *Transport for Suburbia* offers a strong critique of the dominant theory of transit planning and provides a theoretical framework for this dissertation. In his conception of the network effect, "a network of routes is provided, allowing passengers to travel between all parts of a city by transferring from one route, or line, to another, just as motorists navigate a road system by turning at

in American Transportation Policy," *Transportation* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 1979): 3–19; Jianling Li and Brian Taylor, "Outlay Rates and the Politics of Capital Versus Operating Subsidies in Federal Transit Finance," *Transportation Research Record* 1618 (1998): 78–86; George M. Smerk, *The Federal Role in Urban Mass Transportation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁷⁸ Herbert Mohring, "Optimization and Scale Economies in Urban Bus Transportation," *The American Economic Review* 62, no. 4 (1972): 591–604.

⁷⁹ Mees, *A Very Public Solution*; Ray Brindle, "Toronto—Paradigm Lost?," *Australian Planner* 30, no. 3 (September 1, 1992): 123–30; Kenworthy and Newman, "Toronto—Paradigm Regained"; Mees, "Toronto."

intersections.”⁸⁰ The essential element is a system that is sufficiently comprehensive and that offers sufficiently high frequency and/or reliable timed transfers so that people do not fear being marooned at a roadside bus stop for an hour if they miss their connection. Mees persuasively makes the case that such systems succeed in attracting substantial mode share while less comprehensive systems do not.

Even before Mees, the Toronto transit model was a subject of vigorous debate in Australia, given the socioeconomic and physical similarities between North American and Australian cities. Jeff Kenworthy, like other researchers on Toronto, focused on the success of land use and transit integration.⁸¹ Ray Brindle differed, noting that Toronto has an extensive car infrastructure, that its land use and transit are not always very well aligned, that its population density is not exceptional, and that Torontonians are also forced to commute long distances since jobs and homes have not been balanced within communities. He also noted that, contrary to the rail emphasis of the Toronto model’s Australian proponents, bus transportation plays an outsize role in the city’s public transit.⁸² Kenworthy and Peter Newman retorted that Toronto’s transit ridership is higher, and per capita car use lower, than all US and Australian cities. They agreed that local buses are an important component of the transit system, but argued that they functioned best in concert with a rail network.⁸³

More recently, others have added to the literature on the need for improvements to local bus service, which they argue is often marginalized by debates over higher order

⁸⁰ Mees, *Transport for Suburbia*, 167.

⁸¹ Jeff Kenworthy, “The Land Use and Transit Connection in Toronto,” *Australian Planner* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 1991): 149–54.

⁸² Brindle, “Toronto—Paradigm Lost?”

⁸³ Kenworthy and Newman, “Toronto—Paradigm Regained.”

transit. Stephen Higashide, in *Better Buses, Better Cities*, argues for an increased focus on bus transit, and outlines a series of examples of cities and regions that have improved aspects of their transit system like frequency, reliability, and walkability to generate meaningful increases in ridership.⁸⁴

Transit consultant Jarrett Walker has also written a book, *Human Transit*, that focuses on planning bus networks. Like Mees, he has argued for the importance of reliable transit service, including considerations of frequency and span of service, coining the phrase “frequency is freedom.” He emphasizes the need to design transit routes that are quicker and easier to serve. He decries the many meandering suburban routes in American suburbs that take riders far out of their way.⁸⁵

While Australian scholars, inspired by Paul Mees, have focused on Toronto’s suburban transit success, and other international scholars have focused on transit-oriented development, centralized planning, and social activism, most local Torontonians scholars have either fit into the latter category or rejected the idea of Toronto as a transit model at all.

Two articles in the 1970s debated the causes of Toronto’s relative transit success. Michael Doucet claimed that the early municipalization of the city’s transit system in 1921 kept the system in good physical and financial condition to maintain its service in the early postwar years.⁸⁶ Davis, in contrast with Doucet, credits the pre-municipalization Toronto Railway Company’s refusal to serve any new, lower-density neighbourhoods that

⁸⁴ Steven Higashide, *Better Buses, Better Cities: How to Plan, Run, and Win the Fight for Effective Transit* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2019).

⁸⁵ Jarrett Walker, *Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities and Our Lives*, 3rd ed. edition (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011).

⁸⁶ Doucet, “Mass Transit and the Failure of Private Ownership.”

left the system in a strong financial position to maintain itself through the difficult postwar years.⁸⁷

York University political scientist Frances Frisken, in several studies, offers an institutional argument that the establishment of metropolitan government enabled the expansion of high-level transit service throughout the urban region.⁸⁸ Unlike most North American cities, the provincial government imposed a metropolitan government on the Toronto area in 1953. It encompassed the entire urbanized area at the time, as well as considerable swathes of farmland slated for future suburban expansion. The metropolitan government was given charge of many aspects of planning, infrastructure, and services, including public transportation.

Richard Soberman, a professor of civil engineering at the University of Toronto, was Toronto's most prominent transit consultant, and was largely responsible for numerous planning studies and reports from the 1960s through the 1990s. In a comparison of the Canadian urban transportation experience with that of the United States, he argued that Canadians were more receptive to metropolitan government, had somewhat higher population density owing to the lack of mortgage interest tax deductibility, had somewhat less generous subsidy for highway construction, and had stronger provincial support for transit.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Donald F. Davis, "Mass Transit and Private Ownership: An Alternative Perspective on the Case of Toronto," *Urban History Review* 7, no. 3 (February 1, 1979): 60–98.

⁸⁸ Frances Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models" (The Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg, 1986); Frances Frisken, "The Contributions of Metropolitan Government to the Success of Toronto's Public Transit System: An Empirical Dissent from the Public-Choice Paradigm," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (December 1, 1991): 268–92.

⁸⁹ Richard M. Soberman, "Urban Transportation in the U.S. and Canada: A Canadian Perspective," *The Logistics and Transportation Review* 19, no. 2 (1983): 99–109.

More fundamentally, he and Zachary Taylor have both argued that the Westminster parliamentary system of government in Canada at the federal and provincial levels centralizes decision-making, especially around budgetary matters, and has given government officials a freer hand to implement policy.⁹⁰

Those more focused on large capital projects have been more critical of Toronto's performance. Ed Levy, another respected long-time transit consultant, has lamented the failure to implement most of the elements of decades of ambitious transit infrastructure plans since the 1960s.⁹¹ Subway projects since the 1970s have also come under criticism for their comparative lack of transit-oriented development—particularly the Spadina subway route's location in an expressway median, which, while heavily patronized by North American standards, is far from the new urbanist vision of transit.⁹²

Others have dismissed the idea of postwar Toronto as a transit model altogether, notably some members of the urban activist community that defeated the Spadina Expressway project in 1971, and their intellectual heirs. John Sewell is emblematic of such attitudes. One of the city's most prominent writers on urban issues, he was a close associate of Jane Jacobs, and a prominent member of the progressive "reform" slate elected to form a majority of the City of Toronto's council in 1972. He briefly served as

⁹⁰ Soberman; Zachary Taylor, *Shaping the Metropolis: Institutions and Urbanization in the United States and Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 85–137.

⁹¹ Ed Levy, *Rapid Transit in Toronto: A Century of Plans, Projects, Politics and Paralysis* (Toronto: Neptis Foundation, 2015).

⁹² Eberhard Zeidler, *Buildings Cities Life: An Autobiography in Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2013), 546; John Sewell, *The Shape of the Suburbs: Understanding Toronto's Sprawl* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 80; James T. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America Since 1600* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 269; John Lorinc, "8 Canadian Urban Planning Blunders," in *The Book of Lists: Revised and Updated and Even More Canadian*, by Ira Basen and Jane Farrow (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2017).

mayor of the City of Toronto from 1978 to 1980. In 1978, he predicted that trying to provide transit to suburbanites would “ultimately destroy” the TTC.⁹³

In 2009, Sewell still lamented the choice to expand transit to the suburbs. “While the TTC had seen its function in the 1950s and 1960s as providing a strong transit service for the people who lived in Toronto, it slid into a system that placed much more attention and emphasis on serving low-density communities in the distant suburbs beyond Metro Toronto at the expense of city riders as suburban development increased.”⁹⁴

He and others reject the idea that Toronto was a postwar transit model, and in particular that expanding transit service to suburban areas was a good idea. Instead, they argue that transit service to suburban areas was both financially unviable and came at the detriment to service in the downtown core. They consider Toronto to be a sprawling city little different from other North American cities of the period.

Lawrence Solomon’s book *Toronto Sprawls* is even more vehement in its denunciation of the TTC’s suburban expansion. Solomon considered the suburban routes added in the 1960s to be “uneconomic,” and decried the politicization of the system after the metropolitan government took over the TTC from the City of Toronto. “Before Metro degraded the economics of transit service,” Solomon writes, “the TTC was a going concern, generating the profits needed to maintain the existing system and to expand the system by investing in subways and surface routes. All city lines made money. After the system became fully politicized, it became unable to pay its own way, first for new expansions, then for its own maintenance. Service suffered, rates rose, ridership fell, and

⁹³ John Sewell, “Public Transit in Canada: A Primer,” *City Magazine* 3, no. May-June (1978): 51.

⁹⁴ Sewell, *Shape of the Suburbs*, 90.

new subway routes were shelved. Today, virtually all routes, whether in the city or the newly absorbed suburbs, lose money.”⁹⁵

The assumption in these critiques is that it would have been possible to retain a strong transit system in a prewar city that would somehow be hermetically sealed from the remainder of the urban area, so that no city-suburban trips would be required, or that one of the fastest growing cities on the continent would have somehow been able to avoid any suburban development in the postwar decades.

As the rest of North American transit fell into a spiral of decline, Toronto pursued a distinct path: one of providing transit service in the suburbs that matched what was already provided in the prewar city. While the differences were small in the 1950s, the divergence grew until Toronto’s transit system of the 1970s was in an entirely different category from that of most North American cities. There is no single cause of Toronto’s distinct approach, but the small decisions made in the 1950s, through the process of path dependency, led the city to its exceptional transit model. As Paul Pierson has described, “path dependence, in which preceding steps in a particular direction induce further movement in the same direction, is well captured by the idea of increasing returns. In an increasing returns process, the probability of further steps along the same path increases with each move down that path. This is because the relative benefits of the current activity compared with other possible options increase over time.”⁹⁶

An understanding of these processes requires both serious attention to change over time, and the analysis of how institutions and processes combined to produce particular

⁹⁵ Lawrence Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 16.

⁹⁶ Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (June 2000): 252.

effects.⁹⁷ Historical institutionalist scholarship is centred on the idea that institutions evolve over time, and that they in turn shape society. These institutions can be explicitly governmental, bureaucratic, private, or other types of organizations, but they can also be in the form of ideas.

As John Maynard Keynes pithily observed, “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.”⁹⁸ Peter Hall traced the rapid spread of Keynesian ideas, for example, as they radically reshaped economic discourse and subsequently policy across Western Europe and North America.⁹⁹

Keynes’ words can be adapted to the urban planning context, as well. The ideas of writers on urban issues shaped, consciously or unconsciously, the objectives and approaches pursued by the “practical men,” whether politicians, bureaucratic leaders, or real estate developers. The ideas of people like Wright, Bel Geddes, Ebenezer Howard, and Le Corbusier determined the ideal of the great city—just as Paris’ École des Beaux-Arts and its American imitators like Daniel Burnham had done a generation earlier. While political orientation may have determined the means of achieving these ideals, the objectives of urban dispersal, separation of uses, reduced population density, and

⁹⁷ Theda Skocpol and Paul Pierson, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science,” in *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 693–721.

⁹⁸ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment Interest And Money* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1936), 383.

⁹⁹ Peter A. Hall, *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism Across Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

increased green space were remarkably consistent around the world. Robert Moses, the quintessential “practical man,” disdainful of philosophical approaches to urban planning, nevertheless built parkways, public housing projects, and recreation areas that embodied all of these ideas,¹⁰⁰ as did more philosophical reformers like Clarence Stein and Rexford Tugwell.¹⁰¹ These objectives were even shared by communist planners of the period in the Soviet Union, although the methods and final form differed greatly.¹⁰² They prevailed until a new generation of ideas, which rejected the goals of urban dispersal and master planning, transformed urban thought.¹⁰³

Toronto’s political and civic leaders, as well as its urban planners, were no less shaped by these ideas. But, as we shall see, some notably early dissent from the modernist paradigm of automobile-enabled dispersal on the part of well-placed individuals, as well as peculiar governmental institutions, enabled Toronto to proceed down its unique path.

The development of Toronto’s suburban local transit grid was not a result of comprehensive planning. Elaborate comprehensive planning efforts conducted throughout the 1960s paid little heed to local bus service, focusing instead on large capital projects such as subways and expressways. They were models of the rational, “predict and

¹⁰⁰ Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation Of New York* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Clarence S. Stein, *Toward New Towns for America*, reprint edition (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966); David Myhra, “Rexford Guy Tugwell: Initiator of America’s Greenbelt New Towns, 1935 to 1936,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 40, no. 3 (May 1, 1974): 176–88.

¹⁰² Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*, Russian Research Center Studies 88 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

¹⁰³ The most seminal work of this new movement was undoubtedly Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

provide” planning approach outlined by Alan Black in his examination of the Chicago Area Transportation Study.¹⁰⁴

As Edward Banfield initially laid out the approach, it involves initially listing all of the available opportunities for action, identifying the consequences of adoption of each action, and selecting the action that would result in the preferred consequences.¹⁰⁵ Black described ten sequential steps followed by the Chicago Area planners, building on the rational model: data collection, analysis of data, forecasting the future context, establishing goals, design of alternatives, testing the alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, selection of one alternative, implementation, and monitoring. Their plan incorporated a network of highways and transit, deemed to best balance costs with traffic throughput. Although Metropolitan Toronto, like most municipal governments, increasingly incorporated forms of public participation in planning, and its plans sometimes paid more attention to the broader consequences of widespread automobile use, its large planning studies nevertheless largely hewed to the rational model.¹⁰⁶

However, the studies had relatively minimal impact, as few of the large subway or expressway projects they studied were ever implemented. Toronto instead built its unusually high transit ridership through an approach of successive limited comparisons, or “muddling through,” as defined by Charles Lindblom. As he describes it, the selection of goals and the empirical analysis of the necessary action are closely intertwined, and means and ends are not distinct. “The test of a ‘good’ policy,” he suggests, “is typically that

¹⁰⁴ Black, “The Chicago Area Transportation Study.”

¹⁰⁵ Edward C. Banfield, “Ends and Means In Planning,” *International Social Science Journal* 11, no. 3 (1959): 361–68.

¹⁰⁶ Juri Pill, *Planning and Politics: The Metro Toronto Transportation Plan Review* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979).

various analysts find themselves directly agreeing on a policy (without their agreeing that it is the most appropriate means to an agreed objective.” Many potential alternatives are ignored, as is, for the most part, theoretical analysis.¹⁰⁷

In Toronto, as we shall see, many of the key decisions that shaped its transit system were made without rational analysis of alternatives. There was no comprehensive plan for developing a suburban bus network; most comprehensive planning efforts dismissed the financial feasibility of frequent suburban service. Instead, decisions were made on an *ad hoc* basis, with service added incrementally in response to political and community demands, and in order to assist the TTC in meeting its institutional goals of securing financial resources from Metro Council while maximizing its institutional independence. Through the process of path dependence, this led to the continued investment in transit, even as American cities pursued a different path, which led to a vicious spiral of transit decline.

Toronto offers a valuable model for suburban public transit. Even in areas of the city with a seemingly transit-unsupportive built form and relatively low density, transit enjoys very high ridership and requires comparatively little subsidy. This was achieved by providing high levels of local transit service regardless of built form. Though Toronto has historically been praised for its success at transit-oriented development, that success is largely limited to the original Yonge Subway, opened in 1954, with the clusters centred on its stations.¹⁰⁸ More recent subway projects have faced lamentation about the lack of

¹⁰⁷ Charles E. Lindblom, “The Science of ‘Muddling Through,’” *Public Administration Review* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 81.

¹⁰⁸ Newman and Kenworthy, “The Land Use—Transport Connection”; Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*; “Development Follows Toronto Subway” (Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.), Series 836, Subseries 3, City of Toronto Archives.

surrounding density.¹⁰⁹ Nearly no suburban areas in the United States meet the catchment area population of 45 people per acre that Cervero and Guerra suggest is a minimum for heavy rail investment; the same holds true for the immediate environs of many busy subway stations in suburban Toronto.

Pace Sewell and others, suburban transit expansion did not come at the cost of city riders. Transit is viable only when it takes people to and from where they want to go. With the increasing suburbanization of housing, employment, and other destinations, it was increasingly impossible for even downtown residents and workers to function without ever leaving the prewar city. Without the decision to provide significant suburban transit in the early 1960s, and to subsidize it when necessary, Toronto would likely have followed a path similar to that of nearly all its North American counterparts: increasing automobile ownership and use, even in relatively transit-friendly areas, since an automobile would be essential to reach regional destinations outside the downtown core. In addition to automobility's environmental costs and the deleterious effects of traffic congestion on quality of life, such an outcome leaves those unable to drive or to afford an automobile grievously limited in their access to services and opportunities. This problem is compounded by the increasing suburbanization of poverty. Without a conscious, long-term plan, Toronto's transit officials pursued an experiment in expanding high-quality transit to areas that were not ordinarily considered suited to transit. The outcome was far more successful than they could have hoped, and offers a tonic for fatalism about the prospects of suburban transit across the continent.

¹⁰⁹ Filion, McSpurren, and Appleby, "Wasted Density?"; Dave LeBlanc, "Density Comes to the Danforth, Finally," *The Globe and Mail*, January 17, 2020; Chris Bateman, "Toronto's Newest Subway Stops Go Big On Design, Low On Density," CityLab, accessed March 14, 2020, <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2017/12/the-ambitious-design-and-low-density-of-torontos-newest-subway-stations/548615/>; Zeidler, *Buildings Cities Life*, 1:546.

Toronto's transit outcomes were the result of a confluence of interrelated factors, some of which set the city apart from most of its North American counterparts. Firstly, the strong constitutional power of the provincial government enabled it to establish, over the objections of many municipal government leaders, a strong metropolitan government that was given control of both planning and public transit. This meant that, while the local transit system was still strong, its service area was expanded from the historic city to encompass the entire developed urban region. Because of Toronto's homogeneity in the 1950s, it was also not plagued by the intense racial conflicts that divided historic American cities from their suburbs, and that have resulted in the marginalization of numerous urban public services. The strong province and metropolitan government, coupled with an urban planning community that drew more directly on British and European experience, led to the embrace of higher density, the dispersal of affordable housing, and investment in public transit.

All of these elements were necessary, but not sufficient without the assistance of certain individuals in positions of political leadership, particularly Frederick Gardiner, the first Metro chairman, who embraced, far earlier than comparable figures in other North American cities, the idea of public transit expansion as a necessary supplement to then-fashionable urban expressways. He and other political leaders, particularly in suburban areas, made a set of policy decisions that led to the provision of a grid of frequent local transit throughout Metropolitan Toronto's suburbs. Against all expectations, these transit routes succeeded in attracting large numbers of riders while performing well financially.

The Toronto model of public transit begins with a frequent grid of local buses that are all within walking distance of virtually the entire population—whether those living in

dense clusters of high-rises or in single-family homes with two-car garages. Though the buses may not be fast, they take their passengers to subway stations, which they usually access via a bus terminal attached to the station—obviating the need for riders to even pass through a turnstile, let alone pay an additional fare. The subway then enables riders to travel across the city quickly. If necessary, they can transfer to another frequent local bus to complete their journey. As Mees has pointed out, frequency is especially important when transferring: such a trip with multiple transfers would be entirely untenable if buses came only every half-hour.

The Toronto model is a potential beacon for transit planning across North American suburbia. It is almost unimaginable to transit policymakers in many cities that buses every 10 minutes or better, all day, every day, could be financially viable in suburban, auto-oriented neighbourhoods. And yet, the TTC has the lowest subsidy of any transit system on the continent. While Jarrett Walker sets up a dichotomy between “ridership” routes and “coverage” routes, meaning that a transit system will unavoidably have to choose between maximizing service on routes in areas with high potential ridership and providing universal coverage to the entire metropolitan area, Toronto has provided roughly equal service across the city regardless of built form. Figure 4 highlights routes that meet a basic full-service standard—half-hourly until midnight, seven days per week—in Toronto and several comparable North American cities. The greater coverage of Toronto’s full-service routes, nearly all of which offer a far higher level of service than that standard, is evident.

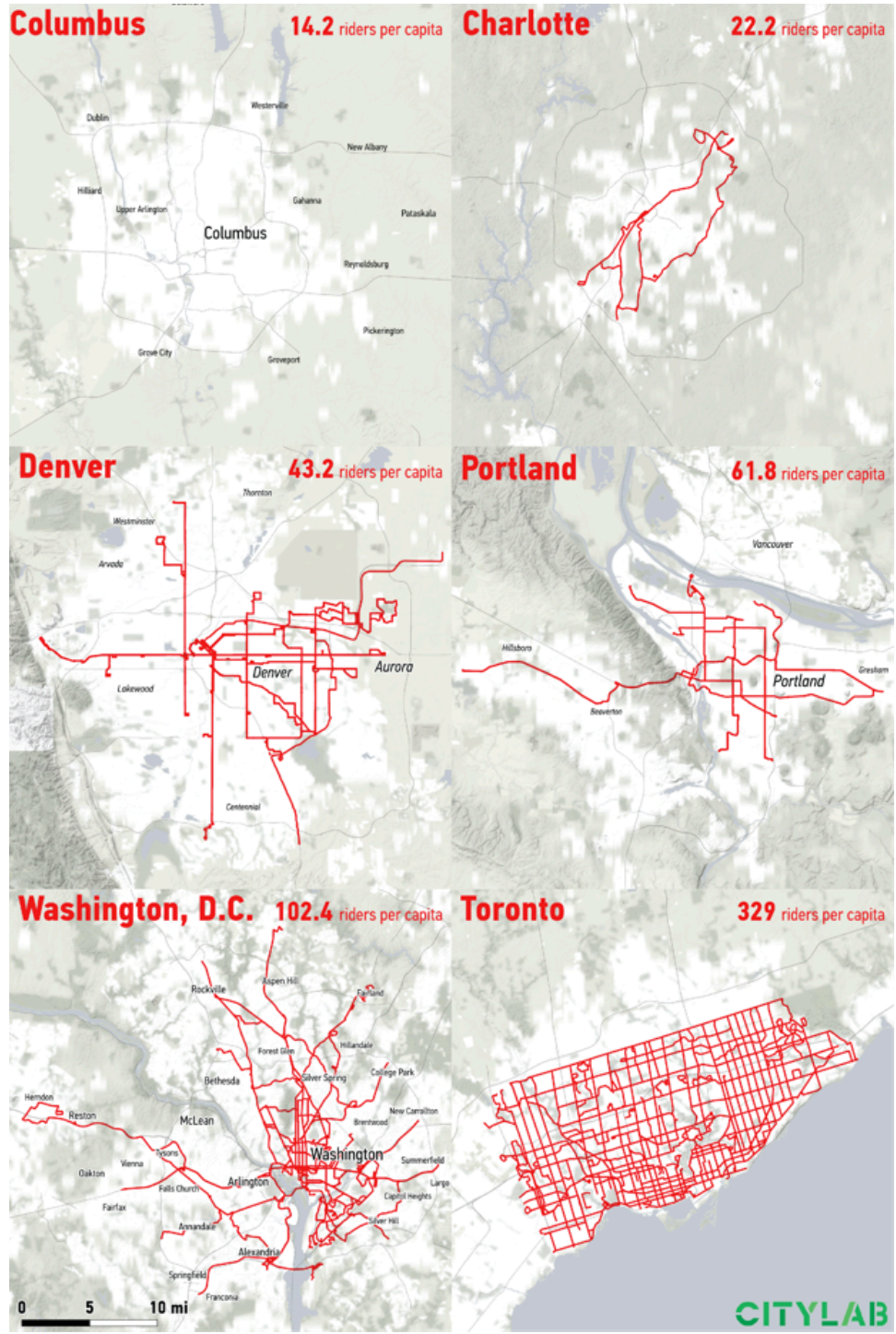


Figure 5: Full-Service Routes and Ridership per Capita in Various North American Cities.¹¹⁰

While some element of prioritization is necessary, this approach, as it has been applied in cities like Edmonton, can lead to a reduction in the usefulness of the transit system even in areas with high frequency. As many jobs and services are located in low-density suburban areas, a frequent bus past a person's house in a higher-density area may not be useful if it can't actually take them to work. Furthermore, given the suburbanization of low-income populations, many transit-dependent people may be located in areas deemed to be low-priority for frequent transit.

The Toronto model also maximizes the value of expensive rail infrastructure. It will never be possible to cover an entire region with rail, so any system that relies predominantly on walk-in traffic will necessarily exclude most of the regional population. In Toronto, most suburban transit riders take the bus to the subway station, meaning that the catchment area may stretch many kilometres and therefore that stations located amid seemingly transit-unfriendly land use can nevertheless be well-used. The Toronto model points to a means of finding a better balance between operating and capital subsidy for transit, since it demonstrates that better operations magnify the benefits of capital investment. Most fundamentally, the Toronto example shows that providing better service can deliver gains in ridership, even in suburbia.

Toronto, uniquely in North America, was able to turn around its transit performance at the very time that its residents were crowding into automobile showrooms and buying houses with two-car garages. The system's ridership was declining steadily in the years following the creation of Metro, despite the opening of the first subway. As it fought to maintain its financial self-sustainability—and therefore its institutional

¹¹⁰ Map Design: Jonathan English/Michael Binetti/David Montgomery/CityLab

autonomy—the TTC risked slipping into the same vicious spiral of fare increases and declining ridership that plagued transit systems at the time across the United States. Most of its ridership and infrastructure was located in prewar districts that were declining in population and employment as a percentage of the metropolitan population and even in absolute terms. Impelled not by its conventional technocratic planning progress, but rather by an institutional need to placate suburban members of Metro Council that threatened its autonomy, the TTC implemented a grid of frequent, all-day bus service across the fast-growing new suburbs.

The new services succeeded well beyond the expectations of all concerned. Suburbanites shocked observers by leaving their cars in the driveway and taking the bus not only to work and shopping downtown, but even to dispersed suburban locations as well. The grid enabled what Paul Mees has described as the “network effect”: a sufficiently frequent grid of routes enable riders to travel even between dispersed origins and destinations, meaning that transit need not only be viable for radial routes with the densest traffic.¹¹¹

This success would not have been possible without the province’s imposition of metropolitan government, and the decision to expand the TTC’s jurisdiction to encompass the entire new metropolitan area. But while metropolitan government was necessary, it was far from sufficient. The key was timing: the TTC was metropolitanized early enough that transit still had a positive public image, even among suburbanites. Residents of suburban municipalities like North York, and the politicians who represented them, viewed the TTC as a desirable public service. If the boundary expansion

¹¹¹ Mees, *Transport for Suburbia*.

had happened a decade later, after years of declining ridership, declining service, and spiralling deficits, the suburbanites would undoubtedly have followed their American counterparts and sought to wash their hands of the financial burden of transit. Instead, the TTC was still financially self-sustaining, and suburban politicians pressured the commission to use its financial resources—topped up with modest subsidy—to add service to their fast-growing constituencies. After years of these demands, coupled with threats to its autonomy, the TTC relented and reluctantly abandoned its previous conservatism about service expansion.

Even in regions like Greater Washington and the San Francisco Bay Area, where citizens embraced highly ambitious and expensive programs to build rapid transit networks, these investments came too late. By the late 1960s when the new tracks spread through the suburbs, the local bus service, which had atrophied under private ownership, was in a pitiful state. Instead of being embedded into a network of frequent local bus service that had built a strong ridership base, as the suburban extensions of the TTC subway were, the new suburban stations of the Washington Metro and Bay Area Rapid Transit had minimal connecting transit service and were accessed primarily by car. While Toronto's suburbanites are able to use transit for all trips, their service is primarily useful for commuting to the central business district. The upshot was a pair of transit systems that, into the twenty-first century, has far lower ridership per mile than the TTC subway, and therefore a far poorer return on invested funds.

Toronto's success was not a result of the decades of comprehensive transportation planning studies undertaken by Metro, most of which recommended strategies much like those adopted in Washington and the Bay Area. Instead, the success came because of political pressure that led to an entirely unexpected success. Toronto added frequent local

transit to areas where nobody thought it would be successful—the types of areas where successful transit is assumed to be infeasible today—and it was wildly successful not only as a commuter service, but also as means for residents of all parts of the city to make any trips that they choose. The upshot was a virtuous cycle of increasing ridership, increasing revenue, increasing service, and increasing political support that would last for over a quarter century.

Postwar Toronto offers a model that retains tremendous salience in the twenty-first century. The need to address the climate crisis cannot wait for the many decades that would be required to rebuild all of the continent's existing suburbs into walkable, transit-oriented communities. That is compounded by the embodied energy that would be lost in the demolition of countless existing structures and current infrastructure. The Toronto model suggests a different approach: making transit work in the kinds of suburban communities that already exist. Given the urgency and short time horizon of needed action, it offers the most viable means of making transit a genuinely viable means of transportation for all North Americans.

Chapter 2: Toronto the Good

The City of Toronto in the first half of the twentieth century was a prosperous and fast-growing, but sedate and provincial city—the second city of the second country of North America. Its aspirations were largely for it to be counted in the same breath as its Midwestern American neighbours like Cleveland and Buffalo. It paled in comparison with Detroit, the Arsenal of Democracy that lay a four-hour train ride away. Its citizens took pride in its appellation of “Toronto the Good,” and they were among the most vigorous enforcers of blue laws banning nearly every imaginable activity on Sunday. Among the most spirited political battles in the city’s history was one romantically portrayed as being between evil—as exemplified by the city’s street railway company, which wanted to introduce Sunday streetcar service—and good—the stern citizens outraged by the thought of a company profiting at the expense of the city’s moral degradation.¹

The city had changed over those fifty years. It had become the country’s major financial centre, and it had a higher proportion of immigrants on the eve of the Second World War than any other city in North America. But they were immigrants with an asterisk: the vast majority came from the British Isles, and were not even immigrants in the legal sense—all Canadians at the time were still British subjects. Their effect on the culture of the city was rather less marked than the postwar waves of immigrants from Southern Europe and, later, from around the world. Instead, the many immigrants from the United Kingdom—especially Northern Ireland—served to reinforce the city’s established political order—an Orange order. American cities like New York and Boston

¹ Christopher Armstrong and H. V. Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2011); Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto’s American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 23–34.

were firmly in the grasp of an Irish-dominated political machine at the time, as was Toronto, but with a difference—Toronto’s dominant Irish were Protestant.

The Grand Orange Lodge in Toronto was a machine for patronage and a breeding ground for politicians. Though the violence that surrounded it in the nineteenth century had died down, the annual parade commemorating the Battle of the Boyne was the biggest event on the city’s calendar. In the “Belfast of Canada,” it was virtually impossible to rise in the city’s administration without Orange support, and the Orangemen enforced a dour, sometimes puritanical atmosphere on the city. Catholics faced systematic discrimination, as sometimes did even the English and Scots.² Municipal workers dutifully padlocked the city’s parks and playgrounds to ensure that no miscreant youths used them to play a ball game on the Lord’s Day, until the policy was narrowly—and unexpectedly—overturned by a plebiscite in 1950.

As described by legendary critic Northrop Frye, “Toronto’s spiritual life began on Saturday evening, where many down-town corners had a preaching evangelist, and continued through Sunday, a day of rest of a type I have never seen paralleled except in Israeli Sabbaths. One could then learn from a celebrated preacher that God was in his heaven and that the only events that bothered him were produced by the machinations of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Orange Order kept a firm grip on municipal government,” and “[o]utside Toronto there was a good deal of ridicule of ‘Hogtown’s’ somnolence and sexual prudery.”³

Toronto’s conservatism, institutionalized by the Orange machine, made it the bastion of the province’s Conservative Party. “Tory Toronto,” another of its nicknames, consistently returned

² William J. Smyth, *Toronto, the Belfast of Canada: The Orange Order and the Shaping of Municipal Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, 27–29.

³ Northrop Frye, “Culture and Society in Ontario, 1784-1984,” in *Northrop Frye on Canada*, ed. Jean O’Grady and David Staines, vol. 12, *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 618.

Conservative members to the provincial and federal parliament. While this often placed Toronto in opposition at the federal level, where the Liberals with their impregnable Quebec fortress were the dominant party for much of the century, the city was the stronghold of Ontario's Conservative Party (later Progressive Conservative), which was equally dominant at the provincial level. With the exception of a brief populist insurgency in 1919, which elected the United Farmers of Ontario to power for a single term, and Liberal Mitch Hepburn's two terms in the wake of the Depression, the Tories governed the province, usually with overwhelming Toronto support, from 1905 to 1985. The Conservative Party was not always ideologically conservative, however. Its support ran largely on ethnic lines and often across class lines—British Protestants generally voted Conservative, while others voted Liberal.⁴ As a result, the party encompassed a wide variety of policy preferences, including some, as their changed name suggested, that could be considered quite progressive.

After the end of the Second World War, the Orange wall began to crack. The Liberal federal government began admitting a growing tide of immigrants from outside Britain, including many Roman Catholics. The 1954 defeat of Mayor Leslie Saunders, a particularly bellicose Orangeman,⁵ by Nathan Phillips—who as an amiable Jewish Conservative Mason was singularly well suited to earning his sobriquet “Mayor of all the people”—was noted even at the time as marking a seismic shift in the city's political culture.⁶ Later, in the 1960s, the introduction of an immigration system without any type of national quotas resulted in the complete transformation of the city into, as its

⁴ John Meisel, “Party Images in Canada: A Report on Work in Progress,” in *Working Papers on Canadian Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 96–99; M. Janine Brodie and Jane Jenson, *Crisis, Challenge and Change: Party and Class in Canada Revisited* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988).

⁵ His sentiments were captured in his memoirs, Leslie Howard Saunders, *An Orangeman in Public Life: The Memoirs of Leslie Howard Saunders* (Toronto: Britannia Printers, 1980).

⁶ Smyth, *Toronto, the Belfast of Canada*, 252–53.

leaders frequently boast, the “most diverse city in the world,” with an official motto of “Diversity Our Strength”—a city where the July 12th Orange parade is so forgotten as to have ceased to be even a historical curiosity. In the early 1950s, however, the old networks remained strong, and change appeared slow to come.

In its physical form, Toronto resembled many of its North American counterparts. It grew roughly symmetrically in three directions outward from its waterfront—much like many Great Lakes cities, including Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. Unlike New York or San Francisco, it had few geographic impediments to its outward growth, with only a few river valleys interrupting a broad, mostly featureless plain. The city did not develop as a result of a great harbour or any other unique geographical feature. Instead, York—the city’s former name—was founded in 1793 by John Graves Simcoe, the governor of the new colony of Upper Canada, as a compromise with his superior, Lord Dorchester, who preferred a location for the colony’s capital closer to his own quarters in Quebec City. On land purchased from the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation, it was laid out in a stark gridiron, typical of British settlements. Beyond the city, a much wider grid of concession roads, roughly one mile apart, was laid out to enable settlement of the surrounding region. These roads would become the basis of the region’s arterial road network centuries later, and would play a major role in the city’s transportation network.⁷

Transit in the Early Years

In the later nineteenth century, Toronto's growth and ongoing industrialization mirrored that of most North American cities. As elsewhere, they were inextricably linked with the rise of mass transportation. The City of Toronto granted a 30-year concession to a horse car operator in 1861,

⁷ J. M. S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2002), passim.

followed by a 30-year concession in 1891 to railway tycoons Donald Ross and William Mackenzie, who promised to electrify the system.⁸ As the possibilities of electric traction made daily commuting to the business district from outlying areas feasible, the city developed the type of “streetcar suburbs” best described, in their Boston incarnation, by Sam Bass Warner.⁹ Toronto’s middle class began to live in almost exclusively residential districts, in townhouses and semi-detached houses. However, this process of outward expansion was arrested, or at least restrained, by the policies of Toronto’s traction company, which fiercely fought the City’s entreaties to extend its service into the areas annexed by the city after 1891. Instead, it wanted to limit its service to the densest, and therefore most profitable, parts of the city. For that, and many other reasons, the Toronto Railway Company (TRC) was the recipient of perpetual political opprobrium—something it had in common with traction companies in cities across the continent.¹⁰

The municipal government tried to compel the company to extend its lines beyond the city’s 1891 limits, but a 1910 decision by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London (then the country’s highest court of appeal) fell in the company’s favour. Instead, the City established the Toronto Civic Railway, which built separate streetcar routes in outlying areas. Riders were forced to transfer to a TRC car at the 1891 city limit, meaning long queues in Toronto’s often-inclement weather. It was a situation bound to produce a political backlash.¹¹

Mayor Tommy Church was the type of firebrand who could both express and excite the passions of the citizenry. Toronto’s version of New York’s Mayor John Hylan, a populist who led

⁸ *Wheels of Progress: A Story of the Development of Toronto and Its Public Transportation Services.*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1953), 3–8.

⁹ Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*.

¹⁰ Davis, “Mass Transit and Private Ownership.”

¹¹ Michael Doucet, “Politics, Space, and Trolleys: Mass Transit in Early-Twentieth-Century-Toronto,” in *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process*, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), 363.

the creation of a separate public subway system to compete with the private companies, he described the TRC as “nefarious,” and made action against the traction interests a centerpiece of his political program. He also seemed to bear a personal grudge against the powerful businessmen who led the company. Most ostentatiously, after a legal quirk resulted in the early termination of the concession on a few hundred feet of streetcar track, he made a celebration out of tearing up the tracks—even though it would then force riders to walk those several hundred feet to make their transfer.¹²

The TRC’s conservative approach to expansion was likely founded, at least in part, on the saga of the Belt Line railway. Premised on the principle that had guided rail development in New York¹³ and other cities, the Toronto Belt Land Company built a railway into its undeveloped suburban land with the hope that the new infrastructure would allow them to profit on real estate development. Largely owing to an economic recession in 1899, the scheme failed, and the outcome was to permanently chasten many Toronto transit officials about the perils of extension into greenfield areas.¹⁴

Owing to the overcrowding and limitations of the streetcar service, particularly in outlying areas, numerous private jitneys began operating in 1914 and 1915, part of a widespread phenomenon in North America enabled by rising private automobile ownership.¹⁵ The municipal government responded with very strict regulation, over the opposition of much of the local press.

¹² Doucet, “Mass Transit and the Failure of Private Ownership,” 22–25; Doucet, “Politics, Space, and Trolleys: Mass Transit in Early-Twentieth-Century-Toronto,” 379.

¹³ See, for example, Clifton Hood, *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ James F. Orr, *The History of the Toronto Belt Line and the Toronto Belt Line Land Corporation*, 2001.

¹⁵ David A. King and Eric Goldwyn, “Jitneys,” in *Encyclopedia of Transportation: Social Science and Policy*, ed. Mark Garrett (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 858–63.

When the jitney operators tried to start up a private bus service, the City refused them, in an effort to protect the financial viability of transit through monopoly.¹⁶

With the City already operating its own separate streetcar network in its outlying neighbourhoods, the municipal takeover of the Toronto Street Railway when its concession expired was somewhat inevitable. On January 1st, 1918, a municipal plebiscite was held in which citizens voted—by a ratio of eleven to one—to take over the transit company when its thirty-year franchise expired in 1921.¹⁷ By that time, wartime inflation, combined with the city’s unwillingness to accept significant fare increases, had pushed the company into the red. Many American traction companies were struggling mightily in the economic downturn and rapid inflation of the early postwar years—a Presidential Commission appointed at the time to study the problem declared the industry as a whole to be “virtually bankrupt.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, in comparison with many American operations, the TRC was in comparatively strong financial condition. When the municipal government inherited its operations, the City was keen to ensure that its strong financial performance was not imperiled by demands for improved service or low fares. It therefore placed the system in the control of an independent Toronto Transportation Commission (TTC). Even before the municipal takeover, many of Toronto’s transit debates were centred on fares, a situation that was not uncommon in cities across North America. Like in New York City, where the maintenance of a five-cent subway fare held totemic importance for decades in that city’s municipal politics, Toronto municipal politicians campaigned on the need to keep fares low. This

¹⁶ Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 14; *Wheels of Progress*, 65–67.

¹⁷ Doucet, “Politics, Space, and Trolleys: Mass Transit in Early-Twentieth-Century-Toronto,” 377.

¹⁸ Charles Emil Elmquist, *Report of the Federal Electric Railways Commission to the President* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 1, <http://archive.org/details/reportoffederale00unit>; Martha J. Bianco, “Technological Innovation and the Rise and Fall of Urban Mass Transit,” *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 3 (March 1, 1999): 348–78.

was especially true in the outlying areas, where the cost of operation was high due to low population density, and where most riders paid a double fare.¹⁹

The new TTC was to be an early example of a public authority of the type that became ubiquitous in the United States for the management of public infrastructure. At the time, the virtually universal view of transit was that it must be self-sustaining. As the Presidential Commission recommended, "A private industry should not be subsidized by public funds unless it is imperatively necessary for the preservation of an essential service, and then only as an emergency measure." Even a publicly owned system should have "sufficient revenues to pay the entire cost of the service rendered, including the necessary cost of both capital and labor."²⁰ Transit had long been a profit-making business. Though it was frequently developed through non-market means like the granting of monopoly franchises by municipal governments with public objectives, the idea of providing operating subsidies or even, in many cases, capital subventions in order to advance the public interest was quite out of the question. Beyond this philosophy, the City of Toronto was also taking over the operation of the transit system at a time of rapid inflation and amidst a grave postwar recession, which had imperiled the city's own finances even after taxes had risen dramatically during the war.²¹ As a result, municipal leaders made financial self-sustainability one of the core principles on which the TTC was founded. The city established the commission with a mandate to provide "an adequate and efficient service, and that only such rates of fares shall be charged as will secure this, and will, at the same time, make the system self-

¹⁹ Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 15–17.

²⁰ Elmquist, *Report of the Federal Electric Railways Commission to the President*, 4–5.

²¹ Frances Frisken, "A Triumph for Public Ownership: The Toronto Transportation Commission, 1921-53," in *Forging a Consensus : Historical Essays on Toronto*, ed. Victor L. Russell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 243.

sustaining – including the maintenance of the property in good condition, and due provision for renewals, depreciation, and debt charges.”²²

Beyond fear of exacerbating the city’s temporary financial incapacity, the conservative Orangemen who ran the city had no ideological attraction to public control of the means of production. The TTC was to be governed by a three-member commission, comprised of local businessmen, which was intended to insulate it from political influence. This purportedly apolitical public authority model was increasingly emergent across North America.²³ Jameson W. Doig, in his history of the Port of New York Authority, which was created in the very same year, describes it as an example of how “the passion for greater efficiency in transportation and for rapid economic growth” led political leaders “to drop their democratic guard and yield responsibility for an important part of their destiny to an agency insulated from direct popular control.”²⁴

The newly established commission was given tremendous independence to carry out its responsibilities. It retained full control over its operations, including routes, schedules, vehicles, and the timing of expansion. In exchange, it was required to be fiscally self-sustaining and to ensure that it never drew on the city’s taxpayers for its operations. The commission carried out the mandate quite ruthlessly, routinely refusing service expansion to areas where provision was deemed uneconomic. They rapidly replaced cars requiring two operators with ones requiring only one, over the vociferous objections of both the union and members of the public, who cited concerns about both jobs and safety.²⁵ The Spartan approach to service provision functioned fairly

²² City Council Minutes, 1919, Appendix A, p. 1937.

²³ Gail Radford, *The Rise of the Public Authority* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁴ Jameson W. Doig, *Empire on the Hudson: Entrepreneurial Vision and Political Power at the Port of New York Authority* (Columbia University Press, 2001), 2–3.

²⁵ Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 17–18.

well at a time when car ownership was still relatively low and, as a result, transit was a partial monopoly.

The values of fiscal restraint and fiercely defended independence from political control would become the hallmarks of the TTC to the present day. The agency, and its political supporters, consistently fought to maintain these two principles, over the objection of many political leaders who sought improved service. They even objected, on many occasions, to public subsidy on the grounds that it would limit the commission's independence and bring political control that would weaken transit in the long term.²⁶

The new TTC nevertheless significantly and rapidly upgraded its operations, including replacing hundreds of streetcars with newer models, rebuilding over a third of the system's trackage, and extending service to the newly annexed territories through new lines and the connection of the existing Civic Railway lines to the city system. The Commission also introduced feeder buses to connect the most lightly populated outlying areas to the rail system, setting a precedent that would be maintained to the time of writing.²⁷ These expansions were repeatedly endorsed by municipal plebiscites; the citizens approved virtually every expenditure on transit that came to a vote, with the exception of a subway plan that was defeated in 1912.²⁸ Transit enjoyed substantial popular support, but such an ambitious plan was a bridge too far for a relatively small, conservative city.

Once it controlled the system, the municipal government essentially embraced the Toronto Railway Company's arguments against extending service to newly developed areas. Before the First World War, the geographic area and population of the City of Toronto grew rapidly through

²⁶ Among the most prominent exponents of this view is John Sewell, an activist, author, and former Toronto mayor.

²⁷ *Wheels of Progress*, 37–63.

²⁸ Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 14–15.

annexation. New suburban districts were repeatedly added to the municipality, at which point the districts demanded that their public services be improved to the city's standard—including transit. After the Toronto Railway Company refused to serve them, the City started its own public provider to pick up the slack. The cost of all these services was large: the municipal government contended that for each \$1 paid by the taxpayers in annexed areas to improve their services, \$2 was paid by taxpayers in the pre-existing city. A particularly extensive series of annexations from 1909 to 1912 added over 8,000 acres—two-fifths of the city's total land area after the expansion—and the cost had become too great for City taxpayers to accept. Opposition to annexation generally came from the suburbs rather than from the city in most places, though Toronto was not the only central city to reject the incorporation of its suburbs; Pittsburgh and St. Louis followed the same path at about the same time. Toronto's moratorium on annexations would stand for four decades.²⁹

Many continue to cling to the opposition to serving newly developed areas that shaped the TTC. Progressive activist, author, and former mayor of Toronto, John Sewell, has long opposed the TTC's expansion to suburban areas, describing suburbanites as “a market that will ultimately destroy the TTC” because of the need for subsidy that routes to serve them would require.³⁰ This view echoes that of TTC officials since the commission's inception.

Long-time TTC Chairman William C. McBrien would come to personify the organization for decades after taking control in the depths of the Depression in 1931. Under his leadership, the TTC maintained a firm front against annexation and the perils it would bring to the vision of self-sustaining transit. As outlined in the TTC's 1938 Annual Statement:

²⁹ Frederick G. Gardiner, “Metropolitan Toronto: An Address to the American Planning and Civic Association” (Address, American Planning and Civic Association, Columbus, Ohio, May 17, 1954); Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 10–11; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 401–2.

³⁰ Sewell, “Public Transit in Canada: A Primer,” 51.

If the city's boundaries were greatly extended it is clear that much greater gross revenues would be required to meet the cost of furnishing transportation in such enlarged area. Experience elsewhere indicates that it is unlikely that any increase in a universal fare would provide revenues sufficient to keep such a system solvent. But in any case, such a step would be an injustice to the citizens of the present Toronto area on whose credit their transportation system has been established, and it would equally be unjust to the users of the present City System, who now, by their fares, are providing the full cost of such system.³¹

McBrien remained chairman for nearly a quarter century until his death in 1954, and scholars of the period universally hail him as a key individual responsible for the TTC's success in the period, as did his contemporaries. McBrien was well-connected through the same Orange networks as much of the political leadership, and he had good relationships with the city's three major newspapers, which enabled him to advocate effectively on the organization's behalf. He was widely respected within the organization both for his effectiveness and for his reverence toward professional expertise. The TTC was remarkably free of controversy during the years he managed the organization, and he was a tireless evangelist for transit, in particular for the long-sought construction of a subway.³²

The TTC's reputation under his leadership was considerable. The Bureau of Municipal Research, a good government group, wrote in 1951 that "Most citizens will agree that the T.T.C.'s record of the years is a very creditable one. Efficient transportation has been provided at reasonable cost; the original debenture debt has been practically wiped out; earnings turned back into the

³¹ "Seventeenth Annual Statement" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, December 31, 1938).

³² Harold Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems: A Functional Analysis of Metro Toronto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 131–32; Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 22; Timothy J. Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 165–66.

system have gone to improve the rolling stock and other capital equipment; [...] Indeed, the T.T.C. is quite properly held up to outsiders as a notable instance of successful public management."³³

A report by a consultant hired by council to evaluate the commission in 1957 concurred:

The findings of the study confirm fully the high regard which other transit organizations hold for its accomplishments. The Commission's organizational arrangements and procedures are in line with those used by the more successful commercial and industrial concerns. The duties and responsibilities of the various units of the organization are generally well defined, properly delegated and competently carried out. The calibre of the supervisory staff is high and the level of morale appears excellent.³⁴

The credibility established by the TTC as an efficient, well-run organization facilitated public and political support for transit.

In a paper for the Urban History Review, Michael Doucet made the case that the public takeover is the reason for the long-term success of the system. Recognizing that most American systems by the time of his writing (1978) were under municipal ownership and were far from thriving, he cites the timing of the takeover as being critical to the TTC's more favourable situation: by taking over the system in 1921, when transit was still in a very strong position, the City was able to invest extensively in upgrading the system. The value of the investment, he argued, made it impossible for the City to accept the decline of transit and abandon much of the system a few decades later.³⁵

Donald Davis, in a response to Doucet published the following year, argued that it was instead the policies limiting the service area of the TTC and its private predecessor that led to the

³³ "Open Letter: A Discussion of T.T.C. Financing for the Citizen." Civic Affairs (Bureau of Municipal Research, July 20, 1951), City of Toronto Archives, Fonds: 1003 Series: 973, Subseries: 7, Box: 145429, File: 1.

³⁴ "Survey of Toronto Transit Commission" (J.D. Woods and Gordon Limited, Management Consultants, April 1957), 2.

³⁵ Doucet, "Mass Transit and the Failure of Private Ownership."

comparative postwar success of transit in Toronto. Davis argued that the density of the City of Toronto, in comparison to most of its American peers, allowed its streetcar routes to remain economically viable into the 1950s. The higher density in turn resulted from the private Toronto Railway Company's refusal to extend its service outside the 1881 city limits, constraining the city's geographic outward expansion. The urban routes' economic viability led to transit being viewed as an asset rather than a liability. Suburbanites became accustomed to fighting for access to the City's transit farebox revenue to fund services in their own areas, rather than fighting to avoid subsidizing the city's transit losses.

While Doucet suggested that the large municipal investment in transit made its abandonment infeasible, Davis pointed out that Toronto's closest American major city, Detroit, also took its system into municipal ownership in the early 1920s, and also invested a substantial sum—\$40 million—in acquiring and upgrading the system. Detroit's ridership declined steadily from the mid-1920s, but was still relatively strong in 1955. After that, its transportation department began reducing service in order to make up its deficit. These service reductions further repelled riders, producing the vicious spiral that came to plague many American transit systems. By 1962, Detroit's buses were carrying 115 million passengers, down from 490 million in the 1940s, and compared with 288 million on the TTC (in a city a third smaller).³⁶ Detroit's subsequent population collapse, largely due to racial segregation and white flight,³⁷ made it an inconceivable candidate for Toronto-style transit revival, but the quick decline while the city was still thriving demonstrates the effect of cutting transit service when a municipality decides that covering a deficit is best

³⁶ Davis, "Mass Transit and Private Ownership," 63–64; Leo E. Hanifin and Scott Douglas, "Chapter 4 - Transit Politics and Leadership in Detroit (1862 – 2007)," in *Detroit Transit History: Phase Two of a Study by the University of Detroit Mercy's Transit Research Team* (Detroit: University of Detroit Mercy, 2013), 18.

³⁷ See Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

accomplished by cuts rather than subsidy. There are numerous other examples of cities' willingness to abandon or drastically reduce transit service despite large recent investments.

The story of Cleveland in the early postwar years bore striking resemblance to that of Toronto. The City of Cleveland had municipalized its transit system in 1942, and, flush with a surplus from the busy war years, it embarked on a major modernization program. It included a brand-new subway, which opened in 1955. From that point, the two cities' paths diverged. In Cleveland, transit remained dependent entirely on the farebox for revenue through the 1950s and 60s, and therefore service was repeatedly cut as deficits mounted. By the time the system was regionalized in 1974, it was a husk of its former self: ridership had plummeted from 493 million riders per year in 1946 to 78 million in 1974. Voters approved a sales tax to fund the new regional agency, which enabled improved service and suburban expansion. Ridership performance turned around quickly, increasing 76% by 1980. However, a Reagan-era decline in federal support along with a recession-induced drop in sales tax revenue once again forced a spiral of increasing fares, reduced service, and declining ridership.³⁸

Regardless, Doucet's point is well-taken: transit that was taken into public ownership before its precipitous decline tended to survive better, given that it opened up the realistic possibility of operating subsidies to keep the system intact—something that would have been virtually inconceivable while transit systems remained privately owned. Public ownership was necessary, but not sufficient for Toronto's transit success.

Davis argued that the TTC had remained viable by constraining its service to areas with high population density, but following the rise of the automobile, such an approach could not be

³⁸ "Cleveland Railway Co.," in *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Case Western Reserve University, May 11, 2018), <https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/cleveland-railway-co>; "Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority," in *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Case Western Reserve University, May 11, 2018), <https://case.edu/ech/articles/g/greater-cleveland-regional-transit-authority>.

sustained for long. Henry Ford began production of his Model T just across the border in Detroit in 1908. Canadian entrepreneurs, usually in partnership with the major American carmakers, were increasingly churning out automobiles on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. Canadian industry rapidly ramped up to meet the demands of the First World War, and after the Armistice, many of the plants retooled to produce cars. Canada quickly became the second-largest automobile producer in the world. This flood of vehicles began crowding the country's streets; Toronto's automobile ownership rate, though lower than the American average, was higher than those of New York, Chicago, or Boston.³⁹

The TTC continued to play an important role in the city's transportation in the interwar years, but as Canadians increasingly bought cars, the streetcars no longer had a monopoly on urban transportation. No longer could the transit agency dictate the boundaries of the city by where they chose to run their rails. If someone wanted a home outside the service area, they could simply drive to work—and many did.

The War and its Aftermath

The Second World War would go a long way to reshaping Toronto, as it did cities across North America. In both the United States and Canada, the Depression had done much to discredit the *laissez-faire* consensus. In its place was a newfound interest in the idea of planning. A conflict in which the victory was entirely organized by governments, who mobilized the population and the

³⁹ Richard White, *Making Cars in Canada: A Brief History of the Canadian Automotive Industry, 1900-1980* (Ottawa: Canada Science and Technology Museum, 2007); Simon Reisman, "The Canadian Automotive Industry: Performance and Proposals for Progress" (Inquiry into the Automotive Industry, October 1978), 2-3; Davis, "Mass Transit and Private Ownership," 78; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*.

economy on a total war footing, lent further credence to the idea of government planning.⁴⁰ The Beveridge Report in the United Kingdom, released in 1942 under a Conservative prime minister (albeit in a national unity coalition government), enshrined the ideal of a government role in social relief, and, notably for this case, of a national government role in solving urban problems. The nascent American federal government interventions in the urban housing sector, which would grow to titanic proportions in both the United States and Canada after the war ended, further set the stage for a government role in cities.

In the 1943 Ontario election, George Drew's Conservatives were almost defeated by the insurgent socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation—a harbinger of the shock defeat of Winston Churchill's Conservatives by Labour under Clement Attlee two years later and a clear indication of the increased appetite for government to expand its role in addressing social ills. The ever-pragmatic Ontario Conservatives saw the way the political winds were blowing. Government planning was winning the war, and the public wanted it to win the peace thereafter. The betrayal of promises of “homes fit for heroes” after the First World War was not to be repeated. Drew's government passed the Planning Act in 1946, a year before Attlee's Labour government passed the Town and Country Planning Act. The new legislation gave municipalities the power to create binding official plans, and also enabled the creation of joint planning boards encompassing more than one municipality, the most important of which was the Toronto and Suburban Planning Board. This was the first organization that included both the City of Toronto and its growing suburbs.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 67–70; C. P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-45* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 485–513; Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C. D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979).

⁴¹ “Report of the Toronto and Suburban Planning Board,” December 16, 1947. See also “The Birth of Regional Planning” in *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe in Historical Perspective*. James Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History*, *The History of Canadian Cities* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2002), 106–7.

Canadian cities anticipated their expanded role, even before the war was over. In 1942, Toronto appointed its first official planning board, which created an ambitious "Master Plan for the City of Toronto and Environs" that was the first to advance beyond City Beautiful attempts at aesthetic improvements in the downtown, to examine issues of housing, land use, and transportation.⁴² Written largely by Eugene Faludi, a Jewish-Italian architect who had fled Europe at the outbreak of war,⁴³ it planned for 30 years of development that would expand the city's built area by 50% to 100 square miles (this would prove to be a considerable underestimate, as development would cover close to 200 square miles in 1974⁴⁴). Though it recognized the TTC's plans for two subway lines to replace its busiest streetcar routes, planning was about adapting cities to modernity, so "transportation" mostly meant highways—the focal point of the study was a comprehensive network of expressways. Transit didn't even make the showpiece map that was presented to the public.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the war years had been a boon for public transit. With the rationing of gasoline and automobile plants retooled for the production of armaments, transit operators across North America briefly found themselves back in the monopoly environment of the turn of the century. Most people had little choice but to climb on the streetcars that they had previously abandoned for the relative comfort of their private cars. The wartime streetcars did not tend to leave a favourable impression. They were overcrowded and, owing to Depression-era underinvestment, often dilapidated. Toronto was in a somewhat more propitious position than most

⁴² "The Master Plan for the City of Toronto and Environs" (Planning Board of Toronto, December 31, 1943); Colton, *Big Daddy*, 58.

⁴³ Richard White, *Planning Toronto : The Planners, the Plans, Their Legacies, 1940-80* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2016), 27–42.

⁴⁴ Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History*, 104.

⁴⁵ "The Master Plan for the City of Toronto and Environs."

cities. The TTC's purchase of new, streamlined President's Conference Committee (PCC) streetcars in 1938 greatly assisted the system's ability to handle wartime loads. The purchase was fortuitous, according to Davis, and was enabled by the organization's relatively strong financial position and its choice to avoid replacing its old cars while it waited for the new design to become available.⁴⁶ Unlike most systems, which emerged from the war with their aged and overworked streetcars barely able to limp from the carhouse, the TTC's system was in relatively good condition.

The commission's financial position was equally strong. It took full advantage of the brief monopoly to accumulate a \$25 million surplus.⁴⁷ The TTC was not alone in this position; Washington's Capital Transit had also emerged with a substantial \$7 million reserve.⁴⁸ New York City's subway system was less fortunate, with the city having expended a fortune—\$326 million, nearly the cost of the entire Independent Subway System—buying out the privately owned lines, only to find them plagued by deferred maintenance.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the transit industry generally emerged from the war with an ample financial cushion—one that would be desperately needed.

Even before the Axis powers surrendered, McBrien and the TTC were lobbying City Council to permit the TTC to use its surplus to build a 4.6-mile north-south subway line on Yonge Street and a perpendicular streetcar tunnel on Queen Street to replace its most overcrowded streetcar routes. Pitched as a “central city traffic relief project,”⁵⁰ it was the type of cautious,

⁴⁶ Davis, “Mass Transit and Private Ownership,” 68–69.

⁴⁷ Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 25.

⁴⁸ Zachary M. Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 27.

⁴⁹ Hood, *722 Miles*, 236; Jonathan English, “Derailed: The Postwar End of New York City Subway Expansion,” *Journal of Urban History*, December 26, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144219896578>.

⁵⁰ “Subway Is Just a Beginning,” *Toronto Daily Star*, March 31, 1954, sec. Editorial, City of Toronto Archive.

incremental project that the TTC would long recommend. There was no real talk of a comprehensive network, only the construction of a relatively small project to replace two crowded surface routes. The combination of the surplus and the possibility of federal reconstruction funding meant that Torontonians could get a subway system effectively for free. Unsurprisingly, they voted overwhelmingly in favour in a referendum held on January 1st, 1946, and shovels hit the ground three years later.⁵¹

When the federal money failed to materialize, the Queen Street component was abandoned, and the \$42.3 million project was reduced to a single line with a planned cost of \$28.9 million plus \$3.5 million for rolling stock. In the end, the project cost a total of \$58.5 million, an increase owing in part to Korean War-generated inflation, and was paid for out of a combination of the TTC's accumulated surplus and the City's borrowing against future farebox revenues.⁵²

This was a stark contrast with the privately owned and publicly traded Capital Transit. The product of a merger of the region's private transit companies in 1933, its \$7 million wartime surplus made it an enticing target for financial pillage. In 1946, the federal government, enforcing a 1935 anti-trust law, forced the North American Company, also owner of the local electric utility, to sell the transit business. Louis Wolfson, a speculator and later pioneer of the leveraged buyout, bought it in partnership with his three brothers. They had rather less interest in operating a sustainable transit system than in getting their hands on the surplus. By 1955, they had reduced the company's reserve to only \$2.7 million through large dividends. Eventually, after a grinding labour strike, the federal government repealed the company's charter. Nevertheless, DC's commissioners

⁵¹ "Buy Land for Transit Now If Ottawa Guarantees Aid," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 3, 1946; "Vote on Rapid Transit Traffic Plan by Wards," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 2, 1946; *Wheels of Progress*, 103.

⁵² "A History of the Original Yonge Subway - Transit Toronto - Content," accessed February 12, 2019, <https://transit.toronto.on.ca/subway/5102.shtml>.

retained their faith in free enterprise transit and issued a new twenty-year franchise to a different entrepreneur, O. Roy Chalk. They had little interest in expanding the system; their only important condition was the replacement of streetcars with buses. Washington had also had strong public support for the construction of subways throughout the 1930s, including enthusiastic endorsement from the major newspapers.⁵³ However the \$7 million surplus was scarcely adequate for the construction of significant new transit infrastructure so long as the government, federal and local in DC's case, continued to view transit as an arena for private profit rather than public service.

During the Second World War, Canada had once again been a major supplier of materiel to the war effort and had become a major industrial power—the fourth largest supplier of military equipment to the allies. From virtually no aircraft production in 1939, the country was producing 4,000 military aircraft per year by the end of the war. Britain started the war with 80,000 military vehicles, and by the time the conflict was over, Canada had produced over 800,000—including more trucks than all the Axis powers combined.⁵⁴ This enormous build-up of industrial capacity was overwhelmingly concentrated in Central Canada—southern Ontario and Quebec—and Toronto was one of the most important sites. Eighty-seven large plants and countless smaller plants served the war effort, transforming the city almost overnight from the industrial tumbleweed forests of the Depression. Much of the industry was retooled for civilian production after the war years, not incidentally setting the stage for another dramatic escalation in automobile production.⁵⁵ These new wartime plants had an additional effect on the city's urban fabric: unlike their industrial predecessors, they were largely located on farmland outside the city limits, setting the template for

⁵³ Charles F. Marsh, "I. The Local Transportation Problem in the District of Columbia," *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 10, no. 3 (1934): 275–90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3139173>; Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 27–31.

⁵⁴ "Canadian Production of War Materials - Historical Sheet" (Veterans Affairs Canada, February 20, 2019).

⁵⁵ Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History*, 84–85.

industrial growth to come. Though the TTC extended its streetcar service to many of the new plants—wartime rationing made most automobile commuting infeasible—it was the first step in the city’s decentralization. Migrants seeking work poured from rural areas into the big production centres, like Toronto, and many settled in the new suburbs.⁵⁶

Somewhat unexpectedly, rapid economic growth continued after the war ended. There was no severe postwar recession as armament plants ramped down, as there had been after the First World War. Instead, the Canadian economy continued to expand rapidly, with plants now meeting the pent-up postwar demand for consumer goods, as well as providing supplies for European reconstruction.⁵⁷ The Canadian population was growing rapidly, both through the baby boom and the opening of the country’s gates to hundreds of thousands of immigrants. Of approximately 2.7 million immigrants who arrived in Canada between the end of the war and the mid-1960s, over a quarter settled in Toronto.⁵⁸ They either went directly to the suburbs, or they filled older urban housing that had been abandoned by their previous residents for the allure of suburbia. The TTC’s service area of the City of Toronto was fully developed by the war, and annexation was still out of the question. New growth would instead be located in the surrounding municipalities—some tiny villages and others geographically much more expansive, having once been large rural townships but now host to sprawling square miles of cul-de-sacs and driveways. From 1946 to 1950, the City of Toronto’s population declined by nearly 30,000 people, or 4.2%, while the suburbs grew by over 100,000, or 48%.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Liwen Chen, “Small Arms, Ltd. 1940-1946” (Heritage Mississauga, 2016).

⁵⁷ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C. D. Howe*; David W Slater, “Setting the Scene: The Post-WWII Canadian Economy,” *Canadian Business Economics*, Winter/Spring 1997, 6–13.

⁵⁸ Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History*, 113.

⁵⁹ Civic Advisory Council of Toronto, Committee on Metropolitan Problems, *First Report*, Section Two, Statistical Appendix (Toronto: April 1950), p. 28.

This was aided in no small part by lavish federal support for housing, mirroring the policies south of the border. As in the United States, the low quality and limited availability of housing in Canadian cities was considered a national crisis. During the Depression and war, there had been little production of new housing, and the quality of the aging housing stock was often dismal. At the end of 1947, in Toronto alone there were 7,000 families living in emergency housing provided by the City.⁶⁰

The reform-minded Liberal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King passed a National Housing Act in 1944, which created the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to implement its policies. Its programs closely mirrored the policies to the south, focusing particularly on facilitating homeownership, including construction of new housing, generous grants for returning veterans, and a program of mortgage insurance to enable low-cost mortgages for homebuyers.⁶¹ The policies led to a boom of new housing, and some of them explicitly favoured suburbanization. The Veterans Land Act, for example, required recipients of its grants to settle outside major cities.⁶²

By the 1950s, the benefits of the clement environment for transit bequeathed by the stinginess of the Toronto Railway Company had run their course, and the TTC was, like all of its North American peers, running a deficit.⁶³ It was at that point that all the past investments became irrelevant, as policymakers were well aware of the sunk cost fallacy. They had a choice of whether

⁶⁰ Humphrey Carver, *Houses for Canadians: A Study of Housing Problems in the Toronto Area, 1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 25–27.

⁶¹ Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls*, 50–55; John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 164–80.

⁶² Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls*, 57–58.

⁶³ “Twenty-Ninth Annual Statement” (Toronto: Toronto Transportation Commission, December 31, 1950).

to continue the TTC's tradition of financial self-sustainability, and to cut service to bring outlays in line with revenues, or to make a different, more radical choice—to begin subsidizing the system.

More ominously for transit, Ontario embraced the expressway early and with alacrity. The Queen Elizabeth Way, connecting Toronto to the industrial city of Hamilton and then to the American border at Niagara Falls, was opened by the royal couple during their visit in 1939. It was one of the earliest expressways in the world, and was a considerable source of civic and provincial pride.⁶⁴ At the same time as Torontonians voted to approve the subway in 1946, they also voted to approve a new urban highway in the Don River valley connecting the downtown to the northeast.⁶⁵

While transit was a monopoly, the anti-annexation policy effectively served the role of planning—ensuring a tightly bounded, compact city. Once people could drive, a different, more explicit approach to planning urban growth was needed.

Private enterprise also increasingly took on a planning role. Enormous developments on the edge of the city were planned by financiers who bought farmland on the city's fringes—some well outside of the urban area—and then planned large suburban mixed-use developments. These private plans were not quite the same as their American equivalents. Their roads were winding cul-de-sacs, and their ranch-style housing had much in common with American models. But inspired by the British new towns of the same era, they were intended to be self-contained communities, including office, industrial, retail, and residential development. In practice, they became both bedroom communities and destinations for commuters from other areas.

⁶⁴ Robert M. Stamp, *QEW: Canada's First Superhighway* (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1987).

⁶⁵ "Traffic Expenditures Seen Bringing Out Big Civic Vote," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 31, 1945.

Conspicuously absent in these private plans, not unlike their public counterparts, was transit infrastructure.⁶⁶

Toward Metropolitan Governance

By the late 1940s, the tables had somewhat turned on the idea of annexation. Suburban municipalities had recognized that they needed a commercial tax base to fund their improvement, and “new town” developments like Don Mills, designed to have as many jobs as residents, were beginning to provide it.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the assessed value of land in the city had been steadily declining.⁶⁸ Given their rapid growth, the city was beginning to see the new suburbs less as parasitic appendages and more as vital parts of the city’s economy, while the absence of overall governance made the provision of regional infrastructure and the direction of growth very difficult.

The situation led the city government to reconsider the idea of annexation, and in 1950, the City of Toronto applied to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), a quasi-judicial body that supervised all municipal decisions, to annex its twelve neighbouring suburban municipalities.⁶⁹ Though Toronto’s relative homogeneity meant that there was not the same racist motivation that had poisoned the idea of annexation in postwar American cities,⁷⁰ the American distaste for

⁶⁶ “The Toronto Region’s Privately Developed New Communities,” Civic Affairs, 1972, Fonds: 1003, Series: 973, Subseries: 7, Box: 145429, File: 5, City of Toronto Archives; John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 80–102; Lemon, *Toronto Since 1918: An Illustrated History*.

⁶⁷ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 79–96.

⁶⁸ “Where Are Toronto And Its Metropolitan Area Heading?,” White Paper (Bureau of Municipal Research, December 20, 1945), City of Toronto Archives, Fonds: 1003, Series: 973, Subseries: 2, Box: 149216, File: 7.

⁶⁹ “Apply Now for Merger, Council Decision, 19-2: McCallum Sees Action This Year,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 3, 1950.

⁷⁰ Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: The Political Fragmentation of Metropolitan America, 1850-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 172; Daniel T. Lichter et al., “Municipal Underbounding: Annexation and Racial Exclusion in Small Southern Towns,” *Rural Sociology* 72, no. 1 (2007): 47–68.

suburban annexation had spread north. The proposal was met with what the reeve⁷¹ of the tiny but very affluent village of Forest Hill, Frederick Gardiner, described as “the same violent and vitriolic opposition from some of the suburban municipalities as similar attempts to establish comprehensive plans have met in the United States.”⁷²

Historian Jon Teaford examined the long struggle over municipal annexation and metropolitan government. He found that many of the strongest supporters of metropolitan government were elite businessmen with businesses in the central city and homes in the suburbs.⁷³ This pattern was certainly present in Toronto, and this elite was a core base of support of the provincial government.

Gardiner was an example of many members of the city elite who had come to question the region’s governance. As early as 1945, the Bureau of Municipal Research, the membership of which included many prominent businesses and professional groups, published a white paper calling for regional planning and amalgamation of all the region’s municipalities—or, at least, a metropolitan federation. "There seems no good reason," the BOMR wrote in its white paper, "why the greater Toronto area needs more than one Local Government. If the various municipalities in the area had had independent existence for 200 or 300 years, the objection to unification might be understood. [...] A second best solution, [...] that of a borough system, would be better than no solution at all." The fragmented governance of the region was seen as detrimental to its economic and social progress.⁷⁴

⁷¹ A reeve was the Ontario equivalent of a mayor for a village or township.

⁷²Frederick G. Gardiner, “The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto--A New Answer to Metropolitan Area Problems” (Address, The American Bar Association Convention, Boston, Massachusetts, August 25, 1953).

⁷³ Teaford, *City and Suburb*.

⁷⁴ “Where Are Toronto And Its Metropolitan Area Heading?”; Albert Rose, *Governing Metropolitan Toronto: A Social and Political Analysis, 1953-1971*, University of California, Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies (University of California Press, 1972), 15–16.

“For decades they had gone on attacking their mutual problems in thirteen different ways,” as Gardiner later described the independent municipalities, “providing archaic living patterns; duplicating each other’s answers with no sound overall plan for the provision of those services which are metropolitan in nature and should be supplied on a metropolitan basis.”⁷⁵

Though the OMB was ostensibly apolitical, its chairman Lorne Cumming in reality worked in close, albeit secret, collaboration with Premier Leslie Frost and the provincial cabinet. The premier was very anxious about the vehement opposition to amalgamation among many of the suburban municipalities. The most frenzied demonstration was surely from the tempestuous reeve Oliver Crockford of Scarborough, who demonstrated that Richard Hofstadter’s “Paranoid Style in American Politics” also existed north of the Great Lakes. He wrote to the premier warning that “Unification would ultimately become the first step in the formation of a dictatorship which would exercise control over the Toronto area,” serving as a precedent for the establishment of authoritarian socialism all over Canada.⁷⁶

Frost’s anxiety over the political consequences of amalgamation, coupled with genuine concern about diminished political representation for small communities, led to the development of a compromise proposal. Three years after the City of Toronto’s application, Cumming produced a report calling for a federal approach. The existing thirteen separate municipalities would be retained, but a new Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto would be created to be responsible for services best provided on a regional basis. Frost’s government immediately introduced legislation based on the report’s recommendations, which was duly passed in April 1953.

⁷⁵Gardiner, “The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto--A New Answer to Metropolitan Area Problems.”

⁷⁶ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 69; Roger Graham, *Old Man Ontario: Leslie M. Frost* (University of Toronto Press, 1990), 203.

The key areas of activity for the new metropolitan government were in water and sewage, education, and transportation. Many new suburban homes were relying on dangerous and polluting septic systems, while the city's water and sewage systems lacked capacity for rapid new growth. Education, theretofore highly unequal, with the wealthiest suburbs like Forest Hill able to provide lavish facilities and poorer municipalities struggling to meet basic standards, would be equalized through a flat per-pupil payment from the metropolitan government to each municipality's school board. Metro, as the new metropolitan came to be known, was also allowed to plan land use, both in its own territory and in the ring of rural townships and towns that surrounded it. Finally, as had been recommended by Toronto's transportation guru, consultant Norman Wilson, Metro would take it upon itself to build a new network of expressways and arterial roads, and to manage the expansion of the Toronto Transportation Commission (renamed to the Toronto Transit Commission) to serve the whole metropolitan area.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the new TTC would be granted a monopoly on transit provision in its newly expanded service area—now 240 square miles, up from 35. From day one, Metro would acquire all the existing private bus operations in the suburban municipalities, with compensation determined by the OMB, and would merge them into the TTC network.⁷⁸ These had previously received municipal subsidies, but now the TTC would be responsible for their costs.⁷⁹ Cumming, in his OMB report, even called for the establishment of subsidies to maintain and expand the

⁷⁷ Gardiner, "The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto--A New Answer to Metropolitan Area Problems"; Frederick G. Gardiner, "An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto" (Toronto, January 11, 1955); Norman D. Wilson, "A Partial List of Conclusions and Recommendations: A Transportation Plan for Metropolitan Toronto and the Suburban Area Adjacent," April 15, 1948, 144, Contained in Civic Advisory Council of Toronto First Report, Section Two, The Committee on Metropolitan Problems, April 1950, City of Toronto Archive.

⁷⁸Gardiner, "The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto--A New Answer to Metropolitan Area Problems."

⁷⁹ "Second Annual Report" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1955).

system, but that did not make it into the legislation.⁸⁰ Old visions of transit as a self-sustaining business died hard.

The TTC's increasingly precarious financial state put it into a quandary. By 1955, it was running an annual deficit. Furthermore, the reformed commission began with a debt to the Metropolitan government of \$66.6 million, comprising \$13 million borrowed to buy the suburban bus lines and \$53.6 million for the subway.⁸¹

It had instituted a zone fare system, encompassing five zones, geared to ensure that City riders did not subsidize the higher-cost suburban services, but it was still insufficient. One way to cover the deficits was to cut services, but McBrien credibly feared that this would result in a vicious spiral of declining ridership and ever-expanding deficits. An obvious alternative was to press the Metro government for operating subsidies, but this would have imperilled the TTC's fiercely guarded independence.

Instead, McBrien's preferred approach was to seek increased capital funding for further subway construction, and he had been lobbying the city to that end since the war.⁸² He believed that the subways would be financially self-sustaining and would attract additional riders, as the Yonge Subway had, and the ensuing revenues would support the rest of the system. It was, from the TTC's standpoint, an appealing compromise. McBrien's sudden and untimely death in 1954, however, put everything into question. His replacement, Alan Lamport, a flamboyant former mayor of Toronto, struggled to carry on the balancing act.

⁸⁰ Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 25–27.

⁸¹ "Second Annual Report" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1955).

⁸² "Says Transit Plan Needs City's Aid," *The Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1945; "Would Need City's Aid For Queen Subway, TTC Chairman Says," *The Globe and Mail*, May 13, 1952; Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 133.

After Toronto's Metropolitan government was created, it inspired interest in its emulation on the part of many Americans. Its chairman was invited to deliver many addresses to organizations such as the American Planning and Civic Association, the annual board meeting of the Federal City Council, the American Bar Association Convention, and the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council of Chicago,⁸³ to explain how Toronto had established and sustained a metropolitan government—a seemingly impossible project in most American cities.

What made the creation of metropolitan government possible in Toronto? Firstly, it must be considered that, while desire for autonomy and local control in Canadian cities was unquestionably fierce, that desire did not have the same vitriolic racist element that it had in American cities, especially in later years. Secondly, the powerful constitutional position of Canadian provincial governments vis-à-vis their constituent municipal governments was unusual in a North American context, although not entirely unique. Combined with the extraordinary power of a leader with a majority government in a parliamentary system—party discipline makes it virtually impossible for individual members of the legislature to oppose the leader's priorities—Leslie Frost was able to impose the metropolitan vision with few effective avenues for opposition. Finally, credit for the establishment and endurance of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto must be given to one extraordinary individual—Frederick Gardiner.

⁸³ Gardiner, "Metropolitan Toronto: An Address to the American Planning and Civic Association"; Frederick G. Gardiner, "Metropolitan Toronto: An Address to the Annual Board Meeting of the Federal City Council" (Address, Annual Board Meeting of the Federal City Council, Washington, D.C., October 8, 1956); Gardiner, "The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto--A New Answer to Metropolitan Area Problems"; Frederick G. Gardiner, "Metropolitan Toronto and Its Planning: An Address to the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council of Chicago" (Address, Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council of Chicago, Chicago, November 22, 1957).

Chapter 3: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Embrace of Transit

Historical scholarship has long emphasized the role of social forces over that of individuals in shaping events. Emphasizing the contingent power of a single individual is viewed as both outmoded and reductive. The critics were writing in opposition to the views of philosophers like Thomas Carlyle and later Sidney Hook, whose Great Man School of history ignored the tremendous social and political constraints that face even the most dominant individual historical actors.

However, the scholars' views were sometimes caricatured. Hook himself took a somewhat more nuanced position, arguing in 1943 that the active presence of an individual can, "where a genuine alternative exists," have a decisive presence on a historical period.¹ Historian Margaret MacMillan has more recently averred that "At certain moments [...] it really does matter who is in the driver's seat or who is making the plans."² In the sphere of public administration, Charles Goodsell has stated that biography can provide a "key to unraveling causality" in the process of developing government policies.³ Robert Caro's tome, *The Power Broker*, exhaustively elucidated the immense power that could be accumulated by an able bureaucratic tactician with a reputation for competence and effectiveness, in an era that revered rational planning and dispassionate expertise. Toronto had its own counterpart to Robert Moses, a comparison that was drawn even at the time, but his effect on transit was very different from Moses'.

¹ Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study In Limitation and Possibility* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943), 115–17.

² Margaret MacMillan, *History's People: Personalities and the Past* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2015), 2.

³ Charles T. Goodsell, "Emerging Issues in Public Administration," in *Public Administration: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Naomi B. Lynn and Aaron Wildavsky, 1990, 498–99.

Frederick Gardiner was born as the second son into a dour Methodist family on January 21, 1895. His father, David, had arrived penniless from Ireland but had risen to become a prison guard and small landlord, on whose properties young Frederick worked in most of his spare time. His mother, Victoria, was quite learned and worldly for the time and for her station, and she harboured burning ambitions for her sons. Frederick was a somewhat rambunctious young man. His lifelong keenness on gambling and, for many years, alcohol was perhaps a result of chafing under the austerity of his upbringing. He nevertheless excelled as a student after some early hiccoughs, eventually gaining entrance into the University of Toronto. Following service as a flying officer in the First World War, he entered Osgoode Hall Law School. He graduated first in his class, which he credited to hard work and extraordinary diligence. It was, he often averred, the proudest moment in his life, as he had surpassed many young men with far less humble origins.

He worked assiduously toward his stated life goal of becoming a millionaire. He became one of the most prominent trial lawyers in the province, helped by his diligence, outgoing personality, and booming voice. He also entered into an array of businesses. His best financial judgment was selling nearly all of his stocks in early 1929, and, following the crash, investing all of his resources into stock of the Bank of Toronto. Gardiner typified the successful Conservative businessman.

Gardiner's father had been active in both the Conservative Party and the Orange Lodge, and had introduced his son to them at a young age. Frederick worked on a number of campaigns and stayed active in the party machinery. These connections proved to be a launching pad for a successful campaign in 1935 for deputy reeve of Forest Hill. This small village of about 12,000 was one of the wealthiest residential neighbourhoods in the country. It was home to much of the city's elite—as well as its aspiring elite, among whom Fred Gardiner could be counted. Though

the campaign was tumultuous, Gardiner was able to glean the support of the less affluent North End, against an opponent who was running on a platform of maintaining the exclusivity of the village. Forest Hill was to be the base for Gardiner's political rise.

Gardiner had long resisted entering electoral politics, beyond his small, part-time role as deputy reeve, and later reeve, of Forest Hill. "There is nothing you can do in politics that makes the cash register ring," he said.⁴ However, he quickly emerged as a prominent participant in the Conservative Party's back rooms. A renowned barnstorming orator, Gardiner was in demand from party organizers across the province. In 1948, after refusing entreaties to run for the provincial Conservative leadership, Gardiner supported Leslie Frost, who ascended to the role and, therefore, to the provincial premiership. Their relationship proved to be important both for Gardiner and for Toronto. Frost was, like Gardiner, a conservative protestant, but his mild, tempered personality and rural origins stood him in marked contrast. Nevertheless, they became close allies. Gardiner was a close friend, and partner in the party machinery, of Frost's brother Cecil, who died at age 49 in 1947. Following the loss, Gardiner and Leslie Frost grew closer, and after the latter rose to the premiership in 1949, Gardiner became one of his closest advisors and confidants.⁵

Both Gardiner and Frost were firmly ensconced in the progressive wing of the party. Despite his pro-business persona, Gardiner had also been a prominent leader in pressing the Conservatives to adopt a progressive policy on organized labour, and even helped lead the lobbying for changing the party's name to the somewhat oxymoronic Progressive Conservative.⁶ As his biographer Timothy Colton described, Gardiner recognized "that the party could survive as

⁴ Cited in Colton, *Big Daddy*, 34.

⁵ Colton, 29–37.

⁶ Colton, 33–34.

a political force only by fusing its traditional commitment to free enterprise with a new willingness to enlarge the social and economic role of government in favour of the weak and disadvantaged.”⁷

Frost was third in an unbroken series of six Conservative premiers who governed the province from 1943 to 1985. They were conservative more in style and ethnic origin—invariably British protestant—than they were in policy. In the same vein as their American liberal Republican and European Christian Democratic contemporaries, they radically grew the government and transformed the province’s physical and social infrastructure. This included expanding the province’s public electricity system, building numerous public universities and colleges, constructing a provincial network of expressways, and, following tremendous pressure from the Liberal federal government, reluctantly introducing universal public health insurance. Their approach to municipal governance was no less progressive.

Gardiner began with a hostile attitude toward regional government, as one might expect given his parochial political origins in the Village of Forest Hill, a community with the highest assessments of any municipality in Canada and one fiercely determined to maintain its independence. As late as 1944, he was still referring to the idea of metropolitan government as “poison.”⁸ Two years later, however, he was appointed by the provincial government to the newly established Toronto and Suburban Planning Board, of which he was soon elected vice chair and then chair.⁹ This role gave him a taste for large-scale planning. It made him viscerally aware of the desperately inadequate infrastructure in the fast-growing region and the obstacles presented by the patchwork of municipal jurisdictions. He was also growing disillusioned with the chaotic governance and limited powers of York County, on the council of which he served *ex officio* as

⁷ Colton, 32.

⁸ “‘City of York’ Movement Seen End of York County,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 5, 1944.

⁹ In 1947, it became the Toronto and York Planning Board

reeve of Forest Hill.¹⁰ His growing passion for government involvement in social and physical infrastructure placed him well within the mainstream in the wake of World War II, and his involvement in regional planning began to change his mind on the importance of regional governance.¹¹

This newfound passion did not exclude transit; as early as 1947, Gardiner agitated for the Planning Board to include a unified public transit network in its plans. At the same time, he had developed a strong passion for road construction—especially modern expressways, which were seen as the paragon of modernity at the time—a passion that would do much more to shape the popular historical perception of the man than his work on transit.

Gardiner's impulse to remedy the parlous and fragmented state of the region's infrastructure meant that within three meetings of his election as chair of the planning board in 1949, the board, at his initiative, voted a resolution calling for a unified municipality for the metropolitan region. Later that year, he decided against reoffering as a candidate for reeve of Forest Hill. His new interest in regional planning and big infrastructure had replaced his more circumscribed interests in his small village—just as he knew that his choice to support amalgamation would put him in danger of defeat in Forest Hill. Gardiner relished the new wider role, and quickly threw himself into campaigning for amalgamation, just as he had previously campaigned for the Conservative Party, and he was once again among its most effective and persuasive advocates.¹²

When the provincial government, in the guise of the quasi-judicial OMB, instead recommended the creation of a Metropolitan level of government, Gardiner's old friend and ally

¹⁰ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 46–51.

¹¹ Colton, 60–65.

¹² Colton, 61–65.

Leslie Frost decided to appoint him to be the first chairman.¹³ Though the role and powers of the chairman were somewhat amorphous in the legislation establishing the new government, Gardiner swiftly and assiduously worked to amass power, both through his personality combining charm with irascibility, and through his absolute mastery of the files before council.¹⁴

Gardiner's close ties to the provincial government, and, in particular, his personal relationship with Premier Frost, were key to his power. "There was not a minister in the cabinet who had as much influence as Ted Gardiner," averred Harry Price, Frost's main fundraiser and one of his closest political advisers.¹⁵ "I always endeavour to meet your point of view," Frost himself wrote to Gardiner.¹⁶ In Canada, all municipalities are commonly dubbed "creatures of the provinces," created and disestablished just as easily with a bill in the legislature. Even if Gardiner did not always prevail in negotiations with the province, his relationships ensured that his position got a fair hearing—a powerful asset for an Ontario municipal leader.

Soon, the Metro Council was little more than a rubber stamp for the plans and policies emerging from Gardiner's small office. These perceptions crystallized when he went on a vacation to Jamaica and the council seemed paralyzed, incapable of taking a decision—a situation widely satirized by newspaper cartoonists. They portrayed Gardiner variously as a "Supermayor" flying with cape trailing behind, or, in a style redolent of the era, as an eastern despot. A contemporaneous magazine writer described Gardiner as "chairman, father image, mentor, sergeant-major and advisor" to the members of the council. "Gardiner, whose features are so craggy that he makes men like Admiral Bull Halsey look effete," he wrote, "is loved, disliked, feared and respected by

¹³ Graham, *Old Man Ontario*, 205; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 72–73.

¹⁴ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 104–11; Paul Godfrey, interview by author, January 22, 2020.

¹⁵ Cited in Colton, *Big Daddy*, 128.

¹⁶ Letter from Leslie M. Frost to Frederick Gardiner, December 15, 1955, Leslie Frost Correspondence, Archives of Ontario

his flock.”¹⁷ Phil Givens, then a Toronto alderman and later the city’s mayor, described Gardiner as “a benevolent dictator.” The chairman’s opinion generally determined that of council: “I feel nothing of any consequence turns without his approval,” Givens said.¹⁸ Gardiner’s popular nickname of “Big Daddy,” derived from the patriarch of the Tennessee Williams play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which had been turned into a film in 1958, effectively captured his role and image.¹⁹

Joseph Cornish, another Toronto alderman and a wartime army officer, was equally intimidated. “It was with a great deal of reluctance that you would get up in council to disagree with Mr. Gardiner,” he explained. “Here was this big impressive man who had spent all those years in Forest Hill and in the county, who was a friend of the [provincial] government and was well steeped in the ways of Bay Street, who was familiar with every tree and stone and service station in the area we were talking about. He seemed to know everything about everything. There weren’t many who were prepared to dispute a major point with him. It was like putting your nose in a meat grinder.”²⁰ Facilitated by the amiable but usually ineffectual personality of his only conceivable rival in power on Metro Council, Toronto mayor Nathan Phillips, Gardiner’s absolute primacy on the council was beyond dispute.

Gardiner’s Style

Gardiner’s biographer, Timothy Colton, described his administrative style as “active-positive,” according to the matrix developed by James Barber. Colton described Gardiner as “highly active and possessed of a strong affection for his work, someone who makes large investments in

¹⁷ John Clare, “The Hectic Story of Canada’s Subway,” *Macleans*, July 19, 1958.

¹⁸ Cited in Colton, *Big Daddy*, 84.

¹⁹ Paul Godfrey, interview.

²⁰ Interview cited in Colton, *Big Daddy*, 109.

undertakings that afforded tangible payoffs for himself and the causes he made his own.”²¹ Gardiner’s physical size and booming voice gave him a powerful presence, which, combined with his perspicacity and knowledge, enabled him to dominate nearly any situation. He was agile in debate, and a master of the cutting remark, but was equally quick to apologize if he exceeded the mark.²² Gardiner had little patience for lengthy analysis, and was generally quite sceptical of professional planners, let alone academics. He saw himself as a practical man of business, who prized action above all else.

Shortly after taking the helm of Metro, he travelled to visit Robert Moses, a man with similar views on planners, and the man of whom Gardiner is often remembered to be Toronto’s equivalent. As prominent planner and scholar Hans Blumenfeld remembered, “I came to greatly admire [Gardiner]: I used to say that he had all of the good characteristics of Robert Moses and only a few of the bad ones; in particular, he was able to admit and correct a mistake.”²³ At their meeting, the two power brokers discussed their shared distaste for “high-minded advisers.” When asked by Moses about his goals, Gardiner responded, with a comparison that is astounding for a Conservative in 1953, that he planned to be like Stalin, meaning that he would develop a five-year plan and implement it ruthlessly.²⁴

Gardiner’s views were often unorthodox for the time, and occasionally paradoxical. He was raised as a member of the Orange Lodge and could thank its networks for much of his rise, but he was not a fierce sectarian; in later life, his involvement with the Orange Lodge was limited, and one of his earliest political supporters was Ben Sadowski, a prominent local Jewish

²¹ Colton, 75.

²² Clare, “The Hectic Story of Canada’s Subway.”

²³ Hans Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65: The Not Entirely Candid Autobiography of a Drifter* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1987), 237.

²⁴ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 80.

businessman whom, when they were schoolboys, Gardiner had fought to defend from a mob of anti-Semitic youths.²⁵ He was an arch-modernist believing in the inevitability of growth and progress, and indeed celebrating both. In his address to the Canadian Club of Toronto, titled “How Big Will Toronto Grow?” he exalted the numerous megaprojects underway in Canada at the time—foremost among them the St. Lawrence Seaway, which he (incorrectly, as it turned out) believed would bring about a boom in Toronto’s port and related industries. While he spoke of the investments that would be needed to achieve the growth, the need for such growth and investment was never questioned.²⁶ But in contrast to the ostensibly scientific methods that define modernism, and in keeping with his contempt for “high-minded advisers,” he had little use for the notion of depoliticized planning. The planning profession and civic improvement groups had long sought to remove politics from the process of urban planning. Their greatest legacy in that respect was the creation of ostensibly apolitical public authorities, like the TTC, which were placed in charge of much infrastructure planning and development at the time.²⁷

The Metropolitan Toronto Act had called for the establishment of an independent planning board, in keeping with this tradition. Gardiner saw the body differently, as a group of advisers providing technical information to the political leadership, who would make the ultimate decisions. Though the board was intended to be independent of the Metro Council, he manoeuvred to give the Metro chairman a seat *ex officio*. From that moment, he largely dominated its deliberations.²⁸

For Gardiner, binding plans held little appeal. Though his planning board produced a draft plan for the city in 1959, he made no effort to have it passed in legislation as an official plan,

²⁵ Colton, 22–24.

²⁶ Frederick G. Gardiner, “How Big Will Toronto Grow?” (Address, Canadian Club of Toronto, Toronto, October 18, 1954).

²⁷ Radford, *The Rise of the Public Authority*; Doig, *Empire on the Hudson*.

²⁸ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 152–54.

leaving it to be more of a vision than a binding policy. His stated preference was for a *laissez-faire* approach. “I am a believer in natural growth,” he said. “Generally it is wisest to let a city grow naturally without a lot of artificial limitations.”²⁹ He preferred to provide an infrastructure skeleton while leaving the development of the city largely in the hands of private enterprise.

His actions, however, sometimes belied his stated philosophy. In an interview he described his own position in nuanced terms. “Let natural growth be the dictator of what can be built as long as it is reasonable,” he said. “But what is reasonable? You cannot decide this in terms of principle. It gets you into personal feelings and public opinion and it gets you into politics.”³⁰ Gardiner fiercely fought for the construction of public housing, especially in the suburbs. One of his proudest and most hard-fought achievements was the large Lawrence Heights public housing development in the affluent suburb of North York—not far from his own bailiwick of Forest Hill.³¹ The battle led to an outburst of anger against a citizen making a deputation at Metro Council against the project. “I have not shown much annoyance to date,” he thundered, “but frankly it seems these people are more interested in objecting to this proposal than in submitting any sound grounds as to why it should not be built.” He wouldn’t accept the streets being cut off from the surrounding grid, either. “There is no room for bamboo or iron curtains in this country. [Residents of subsidized housing] do not want to be isolated as if they were infidels.”³² As a result of the policy he established—very much in contrast to most American cities—public housing is spread

²⁹ Interview cited in Colton, 153.

³⁰ Cited in Colton, 139.

³¹ Gardiner, “An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto,” January 11, 1955.

³² “N. York To Change Zoning: Allow Metro Apartments,” *Toronto Daily Star*, March 31, 1955.

roughly equally throughout the city and its suburbs.³³ This enabled, and was enabled by, Metro's progressive transit policies.

While ostensibly favouring *laissez-faire*, Gardiner used the powers provided to the Planning Board by the province to plan the surrounding region well beyond Metro's boundaries—seeking further assistance from his friends in the provincial government when necessary—to block the most sprawling “leapfrog” types of developments beyond the urban periphery that were commonplace in the Eastern United States. He did so on the appropriately conservative grounds of the cost of providing such far-flung developments with urban services. He led Metro to ensure that the urban area of Toronto was largely contiguous, without large tracts of undeveloped land between suburbs.³⁴ Both of these policies had important consequences for public transit.

Though Gardiner was dismissive of planning and viewed himself as a politician, in practice Metro functioned much like a wide-ranging public authority. Members of Metro Council were indirectly elected, being seated *ex officio* based on their elected roles in the boroughs. Harold Kaplan argues that the electorate mostly evaluated them on local issues relating to their borough offices, and they were therefore largely able to operate freely on Metro Council with limited political accountability. Gardiner himself was a step further removed from politics, having been initially appointed by the province to the post of Chairman and subsequently re-elected by Metro Council. Though Gardiner viewed himself as a politician, and acted as such on Metro Council, he

³³ “Part One: Evolution and Overview,” Metro's Suburbs in Transition: A Review of Trends in the Social Development of New Suburban Communities in Metropolitan Toronto. (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, April 1979).

³⁴ Eli Comay, “A Brief to the Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto,” 1964; White, *Planning Toronto*, 131–34.

clearly relished the ability to act on a grand scale that his insulation from day-to-day electoral politics afforded him.³⁵

When Gardiner met with Robert Moses, he proudly dubbed himself “a bulldozer.”³⁶ He continually boasted of his desire to get things done without excessive deliberation or concern about obstacles, and he had a characteristically 1950s reverence for the ideal of progress. Yet he surprisingly did not always support the *de rigueur* mass-demolition of old residential neighbourhoods, instead favouring, at least occasionally, heritage preservation and rehabilitation. When one purportedly blighted area was slated for demolition, he fought the plans. Instead, he proposed settling a hundred new immigrants in the area. “They would clean it up in two years and you would have white picket fences and flower beds all over the place,” he said.³⁷

His views on transportation were equally unorthodox. Gardiner was the champion of expressways—including one along the lakeshore that eventually bore his name and, most infamously, the Spadina Expressway that was ultimately stopped in 1971 by a citizens’ movement that reshaped the city’s politics for decades to come. His first role in regional planning was on the Toronto and York Roads Commission, and the difficulty of getting what he viewed as essential new highways built played an important role in his decision to champion amalgamation and, later, metropolitan government.³⁸ The “bulldozer” had no qualms about surmounting any obstacle to build highways, and he saw himself as the man “with the courage to say where we should have a street and then plow through the houses and make it long enough.”³⁹ None of these views would

³⁵ Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 96–99.

³⁶ Cited in Colton, *Big Daddy*, 80.

³⁷ “Big Daddy Has a Housing ‘Cure’ All Worked Out,” *Toronto Daily Star*, January 8, 1960.

³⁸ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 164.

³⁹ “Bloor Should Get Subway Next--Duncan,” *Toronto Daily Star*, April 28, 1953.

seem out of place for a municipal leader in the 1950s, and certainly such phrases could easily have been spoken by the likes of Robert Moses. But Gardiner's views on transportation became increasingly nuanced as his time in office proceeded. After a few years at the helm of Metro, he was no longer a single-minded champion of new urban expressways.

Though his early inaugural addresses to the Metropolitan council gave relatively short shrift to transit—in 1955, it was not even mentioned⁴⁰—by 1956, there was a change. Gardiner spoke at length about the many arterial road and expressway construction projects that his government had underway. But he concluded the litany by saying “A disturbing factor with respect to the provision of these four arterial highways is that we must immediately give consideration to additional rapid transit if our rapidly increasing population is to be moved with anything approaching economy and efficiency.” He pointed south with scepticism at the cities that had theretofore been models of modernity. “It is the experience of every large city in America,” he declared,

that a succession of new expressways is not the answer to efficient and economical movement of traffic. Each successive one is filled the day it is opened. The irresistible fact is that you simply cannot provide sufficient highways and parking space to accommodate every person who desires to drive his motor vehicle downtown and back each day.⁴¹

Like its American counterparts, the provincial government was not so progressive in its transportation policies. Gardiner refused to be tempted by the availability of provincial highway funding if it meant building highways where transit would better do the job. “It is a snare and a delusion,” he said, “to keep on spending tens of millions of dollars on highways because the

⁴⁰ Gardiner, “An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto,” January 11, 1955.

⁴¹ Frederick G. Gardiner, “An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto” (Toronto, January 10, 1956).

province will subsidize them 50% when we know that beyond a certain stage that \$1 spent on rapid transit is worth \$5 spent on more arterial highways and parking facilities.”⁴²

“The most difficult problem facing Canadian cities is traffic congestion,” Gardiner claimed in a 1958 address to the Canadian Transit Association. This view would have found him firmly ensconced in the mainstream view of transportation and urban policy in the 1950s. It was only in his prescribed solutions that he differed from many of his peers. Certainly, he believed in the importance of building a substantial urban expressway network, even when at the cost of demolishing homes and businesses in established neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, he said that “It is now painfully obvious that building a succession of expressways each of which will be filled the day it is opened with the traffic it will generate will not solve the traffic and transportation problems of any community. What will solve the problem is a practical and effective combination of expressways and rapid transit.”⁴³

He was not merely pandering to his audience. Even when speaking to a body as seemingly transit-unfriendly as the “Ontario Good Roads Association” in 1956, the year the Interstate Highway Act was passed in the United States, Gardiner spoke extensively about the need for investment in public transit. Quoting at length from such a speech is valuable, since his willingness to extoll the importance of transit even to such an audience clearly conveys his commitment to the issue.

Standing before the Ontario Good Roads Association, he certainly boasted that “[o]ur highways in Ontario have no superior in this country and compare very favourably with the best in America,” and recognized that “there is nothing which gives a man such a feeling of importance

⁴² Gardiner.

⁴³ Frederick G. Gardiner, “Sic Transit Gloria Mundi: Rapid Transit--Is It a Thing of the Past or Is It Our Only Hope for the Future.”

as driving down main street in a two-toned automobile plentifully splashed with chrome, even if he had to borrow the down payment from the small loan company and will be married to the finance company for the next thirty months.” But even to the Good Roads Association, he pointed out the problems. Though Los Angeles was, in the 1950s, the model city for much of the world, Gardiner recognized that after immense highway investment in that city, the parking problem had become insoluble. “A man hitched a trailer to his car,” he joked, “and when asked what the trailer was for he said he had to have somewhere to live while he was looking for a place to park.” Most importantly, Gardiner recognized the importance of transit service quality to attracting automobile drivers. “If you happen to be one of those who makes his living out of public transit,” he intoned, “you can argue until you are blue in the fare box but you will still find that you can’t derrick the automobile rider out of his car and into the street car or subway. The only way you can get him there is to coax him with a more convenient and more economical mode of travel with rapid and regular service.”

He went further, though his audience must have been somewhat displeased with what they no doubt hoped would be an encomium on the glories of the automobile. “The day has arrived when our transportation problems can no longer be solved by building a succession of arterial highways,” he declared. “After a basic system of arterial highways has been completed, rapid transit will cost infinitely less and will do the job infinitely better.”⁴⁴

Unlike most conservatives, he firmly believed in the public provision of transit service—very different from the dominant view in many American cities, where transit was still viewed as a private monopoly with which government needed to frequently do battle. “A transit system

⁴⁴ Frederick G. Gardiner, “Traffic, Transit and Transportation: An Address by Frederick G. Gardiner Q.C., The Ontario Good Roads Association.”

operating within a reasonable fare structure is just as important a municipal service as water supply, sewage disposal, arterial highways and education,” he declared in his 1956 Inaugural Address. Gardiner was anxious that rising fares would produce the same vicious spiral that caused transit ridership to evaporate in most American cities. Given the cost of subway construction, expanded suburban service, and acquiring the former private suburban bus lines, the TTC was no longer turning a profit. The debt for the Yonge subway line had been borrowed against future revenues from the TTC’s farebox, but such a funding source would be impossible for any future project, not least because the bond market was no longer buying securities issued by the declining transit industry.⁴⁵ Gardiner saw the only viable alternative to be subsidy. He refused to consider raising fares since, he argued, “in all American cities [fare increases] had resulted in a loss of passenger traffic.” Instead, he believed that subsidies would be needed for what he claimed would be a “transition period from a purely city operation in a confined and lucrative area to a metropolitan operation in an immensely expanded area where there were bound to be many deficit areas.”⁴⁶

Gardiner mounted a long campaign for transit subsidies from higher levels of government, a theme that would recur in Toronto transit for decades to come. “The cost of rapid transit should be contributed to by both the Dominion and by the Province,” he said. “The Province would be wise in its own interest to subsidize rapid transit in lieu of additional highways and expressways which will only confuse the situation and compound the problem.” At a time when the Interstate Highway Act was moving through the American Congress, he questioned the domination of the automobile. “We do not hesitate to spend public money on roads, expressways, and parkways for the convenience of motor vehicles or to subsidize air travel by the building of airports, but for

⁴⁵ “Raising Fares Won’t Protect T.T.C.’s Future Gardiner Told in U.S.,” *Toronto Daily Star*, August 26, 1953.

⁴⁶ Gardiner, “An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto,” January 10, 1956.

some reason we shy away from the subsidization of public transit [...] As millions are spent for the convenience of the motor vehicle, either for its commercial or domestic use, we will likely find that some more millions will have to be spent to subsidize the public transit system. You must move people as well as motor cars.”⁴⁷

Gardiner had not entirely abandoned the automobile. He certainly still maintained his commitment to completing the network of highways he had supported since his days on the Planning Board, calling for spending \$100 million on four new urban expressways. But at the same time, he called for \$150 million to be spent on two new subway lines. He favoured a “balanced” system of both highways and transit—a position that was at least rhetorically in keeping with many plans across North America.⁴⁸

He couched his radical position in traditional conservative concern for spending and taxation. “Granted a six-lane expressway will do a job a two-lane city street can’t do, but the \$64,000 question is—are we equal to the monumental task and cost of providing the macaroni maze of freeways, cloverleaves and parkways which will be necessary to relieve the present congestion let alone provide for future growth. Traffic engineers say they can do it if they are given the money. As a matter fact [*sic*] that is the engineer’s standard answer to everything. Give us the money and we can do anything, even build a stairway to the stars. But the ghost which always haunts us is—can we afford the money?—and the answer is no!”⁴⁹

Unlike in many American cities, these words were not coming from an idealistic urban planner or a transit activist. They were coming from a Conservative businessman and powerful

⁴⁷ Gardiner, “Traffic, Transit and Transportation: An Address by Frederick G. Gardiner Q.C., The Ontario Good Roads Association.”

⁴⁸ Gardiner.

⁴⁹ Gardiner, “Sic Transit Gloria Mundi: Rapid Transit--Is It a Thing of the Past or Is It Our Only Hope for the Future.”

politician known as Toronto's answer to Robert Moses. A Torontonian Caesar, hand-selected by the provincial government, Gardiner bestrode the new Metropolitan government like a colossus. If he believed that transit was a better use of government funds than highways, he had the power—to borrow from Caro's conception of Moses—to change the policy. Despite all his power and connections, it would prove to be neither easy nor quick, but in the end Gardiner almost singlehandedly reshaped provincial policy toward transit so that transit would receive equal or greater funding than roads, and, critically, he did so before the prewar transit legacy had disintegrated. This set the stage for the city's multi-decade role as a transit model.

Gardiner in Context

Before examining his actions, it is important to understand just how unorthodox Gardiner's views were for a man like him in the 1950s. Certainly there were many critics of sole reliance on highways, even in those heady days for expressway construction. Intellectuals and planners were among the first to notice the perils of total automobile dependence. Gardiner himself quoted Chicago planner Walter Blucher: "I am willing to stake my reputation on the forecast that building of expressways will not solve the traffic and transportation problems of any community. They will increase the traffic problem and the parking problem and will in a number of communities encourage decentralization of the central areas."⁵⁰

Even most planners, however, largely embraced the ideology of progress and the inevitability of automobility in the 1950s. From the prognostications of H.G. Wells, to Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City* vision of proto-suburbia, to the vision of a future of highways and

⁵⁰ Frederick G. Gardiner, "Combination of Arterial Highways and Rapid Transit Facilities," *Roads and Engineering Construction*, May 1956.

universal automobility presented to millions of visitors at Norman Bel Geddes' *Futurama* exhibit for General Motors in the 1939 New York World's Fair, the automobile had captured the imagination of North Americans—their political leaders included.⁵¹ President Eisenhower, inspired by these visions and his own experiences—both as a young colonel leading an army convoy on a gruelling trip across the country on highways snaking through crowded towns, and as an occupation commander marvelling at the modernity and efficiency of Germany's *Autobahnen*—led Congress to pass an Interstate Highway Act in 1956 that provided 90% federal funding for a national network of expressways. Though funding was ostensibly intended for long-distance trips, state and local politicians soon clamoured for funding of urban expressway projects too.

Canada was not so different. Though the federal government was less keen on funding roads beyond a national Trans-Canada Highway, provincial governments have essentially the same fiscal capacity as the federal government, and they were much more eager to enter the game. In Ontario, for example, urban highway projects were given 50% funding from the province, and many local expressway projects were built as provincial highways and therefore were funded entirely by Queen's Park.⁵²

Harland Bartholomew was the chief planner of Washington, DC, and was a prominent national figure. By the 1950s, he was already in his sixties and had shaped the capital for decades. Though Bartholomew was sympathetic to transit, he was far less so than Gardiner. In 1950, a regional plan on which he served as chief consultant dismissed the idea of rapid transit: “Neither

⁵¹ H.G. Wells, “The Probable Diffusion of Great Cities,” in *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902); Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Living City* (New York: Horizon Press, 1958); Bel Geddes, *Magic Motorways*.

⁵² Gardiner, “Sic Transit Gloria Mundi: Rapid Transit--Is It a Thing of the Past or Is It Our Only Hope for the Future.”

the existing nor the probable future population pattern' would provide the densities needed to make rapid transit economically sensible."⁵³ At the time, however, Washington's population density was 11,738 per square mile, compared with 7,057 in Toronto, where a new subway was then underway.⁵⁴ In 1955, he was charged with creating a transportation plan for the region. The plan was to be as technocratic as possible, with minimal community consultation and political involvement, and was led by planners, engineers, and managers under Bartholomew's aegis.⁵⁵

Historian of the Washington Metro Zachary Schrag describes the process as a tug-of-war between different factions—including rail, bus, and highway advocates among the planners and engineers—but he makes clear that the dominance of highways was never in doubt. All of the proposed scenarios in the 1959 plan included massive highway expansion, not least because much of the study's funding came from federal highway money. Though it included a sop to transit advocates—most prominently, eight express bus routes along the new highways without even the benefit of their own lanes, and, unusually for the time, two rail routes—it is clear that the planners and engineers saw Greater Washington's transportation future as predominantly carried on asphalt.⁵⁶

The Chicago Area Transportation Study in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a landmark of the "predict and provide" rational approach to transportation planning, and it served as a model for numerous other transportation plans across the United States. Though it recommended a modest expansion of the rail transit system, alongside a massive highway construction program that would produce a "gridiron" of urban expressways, it made no mention of the broader transit

⁵³ Cited in Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 36.

⁵⁴ 1950 United States Census. 1951 Canadian Census.

⁵⁵ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 34–35.

⁵⁶ Schrag, 38.

network of buses, which was the only transit available in much of the conurbation. The capital-project-focused transportation planning process model established by studies like CATS, which was well suited for highway planning since all that was required was to provide the infrastructure so drivers could use the road in their own cars, was conversely very ill-suited to transit planning, where operations are at least as important as capital projects. Gardiner, by contrast, spent much time dealing with expansions to suburban bus routes.⁵⁷

Gardiner's ostensible model, Robert Moses, was even more dismissive of public transportation. While Moses, as immortalized by Caro, refused to include rail on his bridges or on the Van Wyck Expressway to Idlewild (now John F. Kennedy) Airport, Gardiner was denouncing the failure to include transit corridors on new highways as a "fatal mistake."⁵⁸ In remarks at a luncheon of the National Highway Users Conference on May 9, 1962, Moses discussed commuter rail at length. Rather than proposing a visionary solution comparable to his approach to road transportation, he merely criticized the private management of the railways and warned governments about the hazards of subsidizing them. His sympathy toward the automobile was evident when he said, "We are becoming hysterical and prodigal about aid to ailing commuter railroads, and tend to exaggerate the advantages of mass transportation."⁵⁹

It would not be until the late 1960s when New York governor Nelson Rockefeller created the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which included the suburban commuter railroads, that New York made even desultory efforts to improve transit in the new suburbs. Even within the five

⁵⁷ Black, "The Chicago Area Transportation Study."

⁵⁸ Gardiner, "Traffic, Transit and Transportation: An Address by Frederick G. Gardiner Q.C., The Ontario Good Roads Association."

⁵⁹ "The Open Road: Passing Reflections of a Builder." Remarks of Robert Moses at a luncheon of the National Highway Users Conference at the Hotel Mayflower, Washington, D.C. Wednesday, May 9, 1962. Robert F. Wagner Documents Collection.

boroughs, transit funds were devoured by the bottomless pit of deferred maintenance left by the long-insolvent private subway operators.⁶⁰

The first stirrings of opposition to urban highway projects came as early as the 1950s, from community groups repulsed by the idea that a concrete scar would bisect their neighbourhood. Those groups representing affluent, politically influential areas like Georgetown in Washington DC sometimes managed to have the highway projects quietly shelved. Toronto's Crosstown Expressway through the elite Rosedale neighbourhood was another example, as was the successful campaign to pressure Robert Moses to select a less destructive path for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway around prosperous Brooklyn Heights. Other communities—especially poor and minority communities—were usually not so fortunate. The successful campaigns were generally not against highways *per se*, but rather only against the local consequences of individual projects.

Some of Gardiner's speeches sound like they could have come straight from Lewis Mumford, who wrote his article "The Highway and the City" in 1958. That article was lamenting "the religion of the motorcar" that stood "outside the realm of rational criticism." Mumford favoured a "balanced" transportation system of the type that Gardiner advocated. "The fatal mistake we have been making is to sacrifice every other form of transportation to the private motorcar," he wrote. "We need a better transportation system, not just more highways."⁶¹ He later expanded on these themes, but it took several years for the criticism of an intellectual like Mumford to begin to shape the opinions of most government officials. Gardiner was making the same points as Mumford at exactly the same time.

⁶⁰ English, "Derailed."

⁶¹ Mumford, "The Highway and the City."

Opposition from local community activists and intellectuals, however, was often easily dismissed by the powerful advocates of highway construction, including suburban communities, business groups, the automobile industry, and those who simply felt the car was a much more pleasant way to get around than the streetcars and trains that they had been forced to crowd onto by wartime rationing. This is where Gardiner was so unusual. He was not a radical activist, he was not a neighbourhood leader acting to preserve his own home—he was a conservative machine politician and prominent businessman who had the credibility with such groups to get support for even, for his day, highly radical ideas. Gardiner had the conservative credibility to get the kinds of people that would have been powerful opponents of transit in other cities to line up behind its expansion in Toronto.

Gardiner was not so far ahead of his time as one might imagine, however. Already by 1962, US president John F. Kennedy had begun to heed intellectuals like Mumford, and to notice that promises of decongested cities made by expressway proponents had come to naught. He called for federal assistance to local public transit projects, in line with highway assistance that had been legislated six years earlier. “Our national welfare,” he said, “requires the provision of good urban transportation, with the properly balanced use of private vehicles and modern mass transport to help shape as well as serve urban growth.”⁶² Two years later, the Urban Mass Transportation Act was part of a wave of Kennedy-promoted legislation that was passed amid the outpouring of sympathy following the president’s assassination.⁶³

⁶² John F. Kennedy, “Special Message to the Congress on Transportation” (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962, April 5, 1962).

⁶³ Michael N. Danielson, *Federal-Metropolitan Politics and the Commuter Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 177–79.

But the difference in timing was decisive. Gardiner saved the TTC from a spiral of fare hikes and reduced service in the early 1950s by securing a modest, but timely subsidy. By the later 1950s, he had led the expansion of the subway, and had taken the capital cost burden off the transit system, providing it considerable fiscal room. By the time American federal money began flowing in the late 1960s, it was already too late, because, as this dissertation will further explore, transit had already begun its inexorable decline. While TTC ridership dropped by 30% between 1953 and 1963, a precipitous but survivable decline, American transit systems, on average, haemorrhaged 57% of their ridership in the same period, and in many cities the figure was even worse.⁶⁴ While ample federal capital funding was available, the new rail projects that it typically paid for had little broader network in which they could serve as a backbone. As a result, most were planned as little more than parking shuttles for commuters to an often-dwindling central business district.

It is impossible to know for certain how Gardiner came to adopt such unorthodox views on transit when he did. The change does not seem to have been sparked by a singular event; he left no memoirs, and his biographer goes into little detail on his motivations with respect to transit. He may have been influenced by William McBrien, the long-time TTC head who was also a respected and influential Orange Conservative. Being a British Canadian, he may also have been more influenced by the mother country than would a similar American. London's expansion, he once said, "followed the extension of the public transportation system. The motor car in England did not have the same revolutionary impact upon the development of their suburban municipalities as has been the case in America."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ H. Carl Goldenberg, "Report of The Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto," June 1965, 44, <https://archive.org/details/reportmetro00onta/page/n5>.

⁶⁵ Gardiner, "Traffic, Transit and Transportation: An Address by Frederick G. Gardiner Q.C., The Ontario Good Roads Association."

It may also have been simple pride, as his Metropolitan government had been placed in charge of the TTC and he did not want to be seen as having performed poorly at the task. The comparison with Moses was instructive: transit was one of the few realms of New York infrastructure planning that were left out of Moses' control. Moreover, transit was a competitor to the toll bridges that were the key financial source of his power. When given the chance to expand his power by having his Triborough organization take over the subways in 1952, Moses uncharacteristically opposed the proposal, likely since the money-losing subways would have drained financial resources that he wanted to use for other projects.⁶⁶ Gardiner's position may also have simply been a result of his own power of observation triumphing over dogma; even by the 1950s, it had become evident to any dispassionate observer that expressways were, as he often remarked, failing to live up to their promises of reducing congestion.

Gardiner and Transit

As Metro was going through its birth pangs, Gardiner was hesitant to press the issue of transit too hard. Suburban representatives were demanding enhanced service to their constituencies and a flat fare across Metro. He delayed, knowing that both measures would require substantial subsidy, and fearing rejection from the provincial government, which was still in thrall to the idea of transit self-sustainability, and which would inevitably be faced with similar subsidy demands from all other municipalities.⁶⁷ Subsidizing transit was still, in Toronto as everywhere, anathema. Instead, McBrien's policy, as Kaplan described it, was to "quiet suburban demands without actually

⁶⁶ Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, 920.

⁶⁷ "Memorandum to Leslie M. Frost Re: Toronto Transit Commission" (Minister of Municipal Affairs, July 27, 1955), Municipal Administration Correspondence Files - TTC (RG19-43), Archives of Ontario; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 114.

meeting them.”⁶⁸ The suburban politicians were not fooled; they launched a barrage of motions to either abolish the commission or force it to improve suburban service. “What saved the TTC in 1954,” Kaplan said, “was Gardiner’s ability to delay or defeat the suburban motions.”⁶⁹ Still, he struck a committee chaired by himself to study the question. Though a delaying tactic, this nevertheless engaged him further in the issue.

As his speeches quoted above demonstrate, by 1955 he had become keenly focused on the transit question. To him, the idea of subsidy was no longer beyond the pale. In the early years of Metro, he secured the appointment of a long-time ally, former Toronto mayor Allan Lamport, to the chairmanship of the TTC. Lamport was a unique figure—he had been the first Liberal mayor of the city in decades, and had been a leader in loosening its astringent blue laws. He brought an amiable, jocular, but occasionally pugnacious personality.⁷⁰ His sympathy for suburban transit expansion, by the standards of City politicians, made him an attractive candidate to Gardiner. However, Lamport also vehemently defended the long-cherished independence of the TTC, which left the commission out of much of Metro’s planning process in the early years, and eventually wore on the relationship.⁷¹

As Gardiner took a greater interest in transit, he began to see the TTC’s independence as an obstacle to his plans, and he held the understandable view that if Metro was going to be subsidizing the TTC, it would need to take a more active role in its management. Lamport bristled, and mounted a campaign against his erstwhile patron. He misjudged Gardiner as a determined

⁶⁸ Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 134.

⁶⁹ Kaplan, 134.

⁷⁰ Eric Hutton, “He Changed the Toronto Sunday,” *Maclean’s*, July 15, 1952.

⁷¹ Frances Frisken, *The Public Metropolis: The Political Dynamics of Urban Expansion in the Toronto Region, 1924-2003* (Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2007), 84; Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 32.

supporter of expressways who, if he secured control of the TTC, would doom prospects for subway construction.⁷² Instead, Gardiner proved to be an equally determined friend of transit, and he was able to corral suburban councillors into supporting it in a way that Lamport, inevitably associated with the City, could not have.

Entreaties to Premier Frost from the long-time Liberal unsurprisingly fell on deaf ears. In a private briefing note in response to a letter from Lamport, T.C. Clarke, a senior advisor to the premier, remarked, “It would certainly appear that the T.T.C. is endeavouring to be a ‘world unto itself’ subject neither to the regulations of the Metropolitan Authority or for that matter to the regulations of the Province. Certainly, the Commission should have a certain amount of independence regarding their policies, etc., but surely they must be responsible to some other authority. Surely the Province, if not Metro, should have some jurisdiction over their methods of operation, particularly if the Province has the same authority over municipal functions.”⁷³

Lamport and Gardiner’s relationship gradually descended into sometimes absurd feuding, which provided ample fodder for the city’s newspapers and tarnished the TTC’s once-sterling reputation for good management.⁷⁴ Though one magazine writer described Gardiner as the aggressor in most of their battles, Lamport’s own excesses did not enhance his credibility. The row culminated in Lamport dressing in disguise as a “tourist” to stand outside Gardiner’s office, with press in tow, to berate the TTC’s general manager of subway construction for daring to meet with the Metro chairman. Gardiner prevailed in the end, with the strong backing of good government

⁷² Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 137–38.

⁷³ T. C. Clarke, “Memorandum from T.C. Clarke to Hon. Leslie M. Frost, Q.C. Re: Mr. Allan A. Lamport’s Letter of September 1st, 1960,” September 9, 1960, T.C. Clarke Memoranda to Premier Frost, Archives of Ontario.

⁷⁴ “The Future of the TTC,” Civic Affairs (Bureau of Municipal Research, September 20, 1960), Fonds: 1003, Series: 973, Subseries: 7, Box: 145429, File: 2, City of Toronto Archives.

groups and much of the press, and after the province threatened to intervene in favour of Metro.⁷⁵ Lamport resigned from the TTC in 1960 to run a quixotic campaign for the Toronto mayoralty on an anti-Gardiner platform.⁷⁶

The comedy of the dispute disguised its importance. Though he was personally sympathetic to limited expansion of service to the suburbs, Lamport represented two factions that were perpetually hostile to the idea. Firstly, he represented the TTC administration, which was highly conservative and keen on maintaining its “efficiency” and financial position above all else. It had long opposed expansion of its service area through annexation, preferring to remain in the comparatively clement environment of the neighbourhoods built before the automobile. Secondly, he represented City transit riders, who viewed the provision of suburban service as a drain on the authority’s resources, which would be better spent on their already busy routes. These forces would remain strong to the present day, but through Lamport’s defeat and the imposition of Metro Council’s dominance of the TTC, Gardiner set the stage for the radical expansion of transit service to the suburbs that placed Toronto on a very different path from most American cities.

In 1955, Gardiner lobbied Frost to allow Metro to provide an ostensibly one-time \$2.5 million subsidy to the TTC in order to mitigate a fare hike, making the case to him that the only alternative was to raise fares, which had been proven to drive passengers away and put transit

⁷⁵ “The Future of the TTC.”

⁷⁶ “Duncan Must Go--Lampy; ‘No Business To See F.G.,’” *Toronto Daily Star*, June 13, 1960; Michael Enright, “Lamport the Grand Gladiator Fumes, Growls after 31 Years,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1968; “Lamport Burns His Broadloom Behind Him,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 16, 1960, sec. Metro; Harry Bruce, “Lamport v Gardiner: The 2 Behemoths Collide at Metro,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 22, 1960; Alden Baker, “TTC, Gardiner Trade Threats In Route Debate,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 7, 1960; “New Fight Promised On Abolition,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 14, 1960; “Minister Warns TTC Chiefs to Stop Feuding, Bickering,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1959; “Lamport to Be Third Entry in Race for Mayor’s Office: Delays Resignation From TTC Position,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 23, 1960.

systems into a vicious cycle in the United States.⁷⁷ In response to Gardiner's letter, Frost's advisors produced a memorandum opposing the idea. "Officials of the Department of Municipal Affairs believe that if the Metropolitan Council is permitted to make even one grant to cover the deficit of the Toronto Transit Commission, [...] the municipality will be given the right to underwrite the deficits from then on." They warned that this would destroy the political independence of the Commission—maintained even throughout the Depression—and result in the addition of unprofitable service in response to political pressure.⁷⁸ They were not wrong in their forecast, but clinging to the old ways of operating was proven to be fatal to transit in many American cities. Despite the opposition, Gardiner's persuasiveness and relationship with the premier enabled him to prevail. In so doing, he broke the dam that had long barred governments from subvention of public transit, as Frost's advisers had predicted.

The idea of direct provincial funding for transit was a bridge too far for Frost, however, and even Gardiner struggled for years before persuading him otherwise. "Our money for building highways comes from gasoline tax," Frost wrote to an adviser after one of Gardiner's appeals. "Subways would be of no revenue to us whatever and could never be, and in fact we would be subsidizing people not to use our highways, and accordingly not to pay us any revenue. This has no appeal to me."⁷⁹

Gardiner also mounted a fierce campaign for federal subsidy of transit, a theme that would often emerge in Toronto transit discussion—raised not infrequently by provincial politicians

⁷⁷ "Suburbs Put Up Battle But Grant of \$2,500,000 to TTC Is Passed 11 to 6," *Toronto Daily Star*, September 9, 1955. Letter from Frederick Gardiner to Leslie M. Frost, August 22, 1955, Leslie M. Frost Correspondence Fonds, Archives of Ontario.

⁷⁸ "Memorandum to Leslie M. Frost Re: Toronto Transit Commission."

⁷⁹ Letter from Leslie M. Frost to H.M. Robbins, February 29, 1956, Leslie M. Frost Correspondence Fonds, Archives of Ontario.

seeking to spread the financial burden. He repeated the call in speech after speech, though to no avail—Canadian federal governments had never had a constitutional role in local affairs, and his persuasive charm was less effective on the Liberal federal government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and his successor John Diefenbaker—a Conservative, but of a rival faction to Gardiner—than it usually was on his old friend Premier Frost.⁸⁰

For the moment, Metro was on its own in its efforts to get its next subway project built—an east-west route to complement the north-south Yonge line. The City had long supported the idea, but suburban politicians were far more sceptical of a project that they saw as primarily benefitting City residents. They were still demanding a single fare for the entire region in exchange for their assent, viewing the double fare that outer suburban riders paid to get downtown as punitive. Without that fare supplement, however, any hope of supporting the TTC's expenses out of the farebox was doomed. Gardiner temporized for several years, hoping for salvation from levels of government above, until 1957 when he became determined to see the \$150 million project through to completion. He declared that he would “pound this thing through with an iron fist.”⁸¹

The decision to add a new subway line in 1958 was a decisive moment in the region's transit history. The first subway had been approved with the belief that it would be self-supporting—effectively a continuation of the way that transit had been run before the war. This time, it was different. Transit was no longer a profitable venture. All recognized that if the subway were to be built, it would have to be with direct government support. Transit had shifted from

⁸⁰ Gardiner, “Traffic, Transit and Transportation: An Address by Frederick G. Gardiner Q.C., The Ontario Good Roads Association”; Gardiner, “Sic Transit Gloria Mundi: Rapid Transit—Is It a Thing of the Past or Is It Our Only Hope for the Future”; Gardiner, “An Address to the Inaugural Meeting of the Council of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto,” January 10, 1956; “Diefenbaker to Meet Metro Delegation On Subway Speedup,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1961; “Ottawa Subway Loan Reported Turned Down; New Basis Suggested,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 10, 1961; “Ottawa's Reason for Refusal: No Legislation for Subway Loan,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 25, 1961.

⁸¹ *The Telegram*, March 18, 1958

being the principal means of moving people about the city, to being seen as an alternative to the automobile, which was choking cities with its insatiable demands for more road lanes and more parking spaces. Most North American cities waited until a decade or more later, when their transit system had shrivelled to next-to-nothing, but Toronto embraced transit's new role while it was still a viable mode of transportation. To a considerable extent, it can thank Gardiner for the shift.

The "Great Subway Debate" was, a contemporaneous source wrote with some exaggeration, "the biggest and longest row in Toronto's stormy political history."⁸² As befits such a lengthy disputation, there were several distinct elements in contention. Suburban opposition had to be overcome, but even before that could be resolved, Metro's professional planners sparred with the TTC's administrators over the choice of route for the new line. The dispute portended a theme that would become common in the decades to come, as it pitted youthful planners armed with a 1950s version of "big data" against the long-time transit administrators who relied on their instinct and expertise gleaned from years of running a transit system. Murray Jones, a man barely in his thirties who was one of few Canadians at the time with a university degree in planning, led the former. Though Gardiner's oft-stated scepticism of planners made him initially contemptuous, the Chairman eventually came to respect Jones. The planners analyzed desire lines using computers—extraordinary technology in 1957—and determined that the best route for a new subway would be shaped as a 'U', replacing the busy streetcar along Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue on the eastern and western ends of the route, but turning south to run along the long-planned subway corridor of Queen Street. They were backed enthusiastically by good-government groups like the Bureau of Municipal Research, which unsurprisingly was attracted to their aura of technical planning

⁸² Clare, "The Hectic Story of Canada's Subway."

expertise.⁸³ Despite their pretensions to rational dispassion, their recommendations also betrayed a different philosophical approach to transit planning. They intended to divert commuters travelling long distances from the suburbs into downtown from the highways, and they believed in anticipating future growth, or lack thereof.⁸⁴

The TTC's administrators, as John Clare described in *Maclean's* magazine, viewed the youthful Jones and his assistant, the European *émigré* intellectual Hans Blumenfeld, "much the same way veteran bush pilots might look at jet jockeys who had just won their wings. The TTC men had a hard time to keep from looking smug when they reminded their listeners that they knew nothing about electronic gadgets; all they knew was how to move people from one place to another."⁸⁵ The Planning Board's wasn't helped when the TTC officials were able to spot obvious flaws in the sophisticated computer model—flaws that had conveniently bolstered the Planning Board's case for the 'U'.⁸⁶

Backed by sympathetic newspapers and the Commission led by Allan Lamport, and armed with their own consultant, Norman Wilson, TTC staff preferred the tried-and-true method of replacing an already busy streetcar route along Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue with a subway. There was no need to figure out where passengers might want to travel in the future—it was merely

⁸³ "Bulletin: Behind The Headlines, A Statement On The Subway Controversy," Civic Affairs (Bureau of Municipal Research, February 14, 1958), Fonds: 1003, Series: 973, Subseries: 7, Box: 145429, File: 2, City of Toronto Archives.

⁸⁴ "East West Transit Line and Expressway: Preliminary Report and Analysis of Study" (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, May 1956); "Subways: Metro's Billion Dollar Issue," *Toronto Daily Star*, January 7, 1958, sec. Editorial; Clare, "The Hectic Story of Canada's Subway."

⁸⁵ Clare, "The Hectic Story of Canada's Subway."

⁸⁶ W.E. Duncan, "Bloor-University-Danforth Subway/Bloor-Queen 'U' Subway: Final Discussion with Metro Planning Staff" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1958).

necessary to look at where they were travelling now.⁸⁷ As the TTC's staff noted, the 'U' would leave the Bloor streetcar route woefully overcrowded, with no prospect of relief for many years, and its aging infrastructure would need to be rehabilitated at considerable cost in the meantime.⁸⁸

The crux of the debate, the pro-transit *Star* claimed in a contemporaneous editorial, was about the future viability of transit as a major means of transportation in the region. The planners, the transit-sympathetic newspaper argued, did not believe that ridership would substantially increase in the future, and so they preferred a route that effectively accomplished both tasks at once: serving commuters from the northeast and northwest, and serving downtown east-west trips. One of the primary criteria governing their planning was that the new subway network "Should be able to operate as a satisfactory system, if future extension should prove to be not warranted."⁸⁹

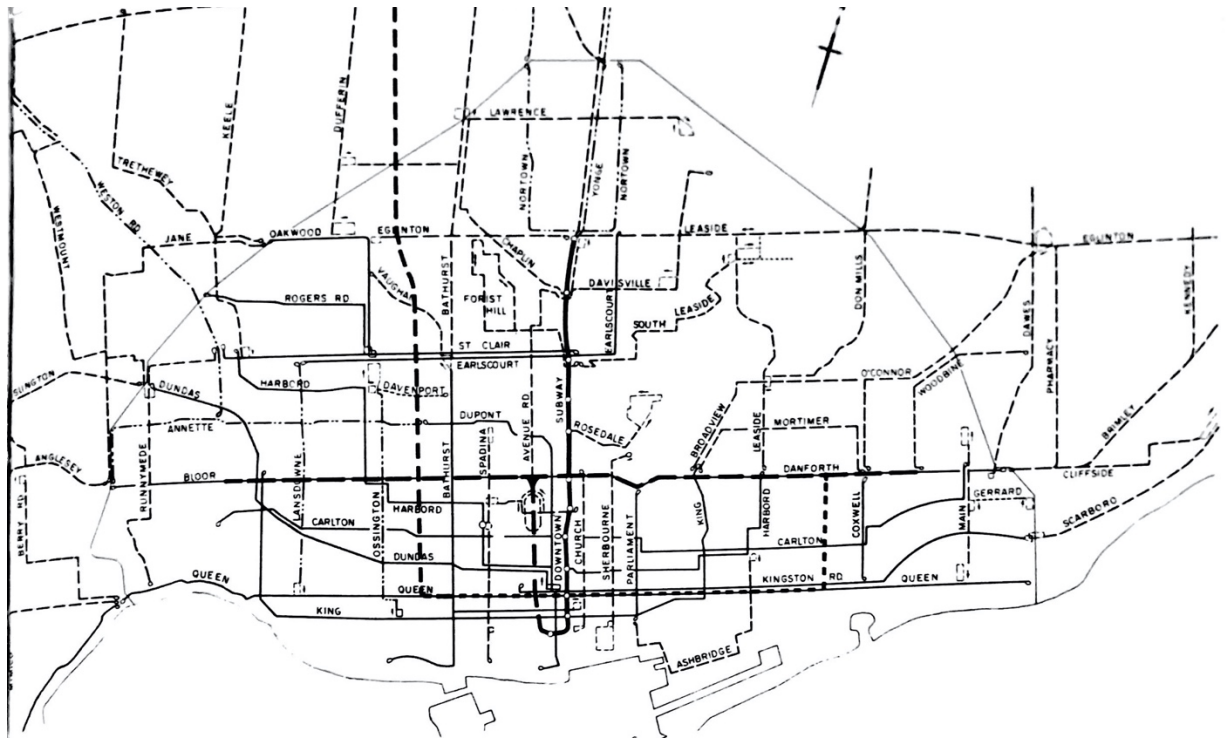
The planners did not see the subway as being part of an anywhere-to-anywhere transit network, but rather as a means of accommodating downtown-bound commuting traffic. "The sole justification for, and primary function of a rapid transit system in the Toronto Metropolitan Area," they wrote, "is to serve movement between the medium density residential area [meaning the prewar neighbourhoods of the City of Toronto and adjacent municipalities] and the downtown area."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Norman D. Wilson, "Report on the Bloor-Queen-U-Subway" (Toronto Transit Commission, December 9, 1957); Clare, "The Hectic Story of Canada's Subway"; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 155; Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 30.

⁸⁸ Duncan, "Bloor-University-Danforth Subway/Bloor-Queen 'U' Subway: Final Discussion with Metro Planning Staff."

⁸⁹ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "Report on East-West Rapid Transit: Part III" (Toronto: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, December 1957), 19.

⁹⁰ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 5.



proposed 'w' system of rapid transit, 3 stages

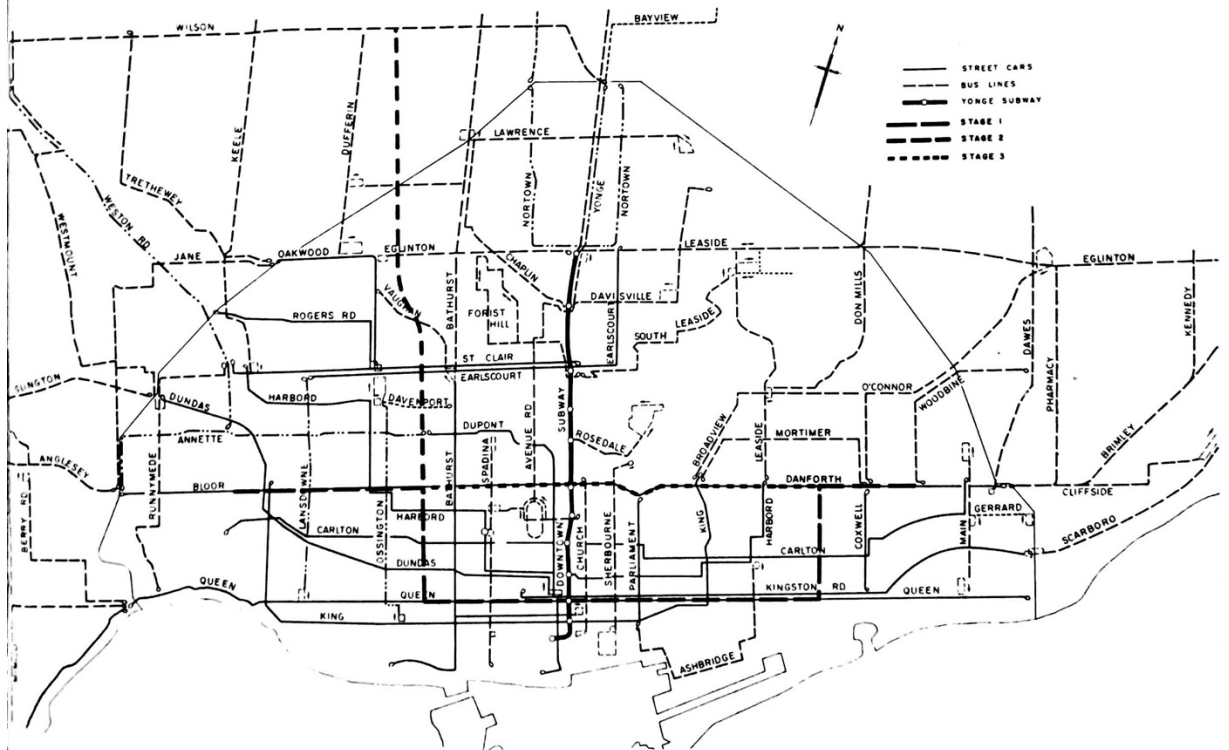


plate 14 proposed 'u' system of rapid transit, 3 stages

Figure 6: Competing Subway Proposals, including future extensions, 1957.⁹¹

The TTC's vision was to replace one streetcar route as part of a longer-term vision of replacing a number of its busiest surface routes with subways, producing a grid that they argued would both generate and accommodate escalating ridership as a true anywhere-to-anywhere network.⁹² The planners' option, focused almost entirely on downtown commuters, would force riders travelling east-west across the city to take a long detour to the south through downtown, or to transfer twice from the subway to the old Bloor streetcar and then back onto the subway.

By early 1958, the two options had been refined into alternatives that would be presented to Metro Council—effectively meaning Gardiner—for final adjudication. The TTC favoured a \$191 million (\$1.721 billion in 2020 dollars) project, including the cost of new subway trains, to build 12 km east-west route along Bloor and Danforth, intersecting the existing subway about two kilometres north of the downtown core. The main route was accompanied by an extension of the Yonge line looping back to the north along University Avenue, a wide boulevard a few blocks to the west of Yonge Street, to meet the Bloor subway and provide additional capacity for downtown-bound riders. The Planning Board had by then dropped their plans for the to turn east and west once it had arrived at Bloor and Danforth, which had made the two options identical in length, in favour of a simple 'U' from Christie and Bloor to Greenwood and Danforth via Queen Street in the heart of downtown. They acknowledged that the central section on Bloor and Danforth should be prioritized over the eastern and western spurs. The shorter 'U' plan was \$38 million cheaper than the TTC's Bloor-Danforth-University plan, but the lower cost was partly offset by the need to invest \$13 million in rebuilding the Bloor-Danforth streetcar infrastructure for additional years

⁹² "Subways: Metro's Billion Dollar Issue"; Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 30.

of service. Jones suggested a “compromise” plan that would involve stretching construction over fifteen years instead of ten and would involve the completion of both routes, minus the University line that closely paralleled the existing Yonge subway. The TTC was dismissive, since it would not provide much-needed relief to the Yonge subway in time, or replace the Bloor streetcar before its tracks had fallen apart. Jones’ proposal must certainly be counted as a major missed opportunity to get the whole much-needed downtown network built by 1973, though its \$268 million cost was well beyond Metro’s \$200 million budget.⁹³

Gardiner’s resolution of the conundrum was closer in form to the ideal of rational planning as laid out by Banfield than that author’s real-world examples would have predicted, though the ultimate decision was made by a politician and not a dispassionate expert, and the decision was ratified by classical political horse-trading.⁹⁴ Both groups would be given an opportunity to present their arguments and data to the Metro Council, which would make the final decision between the two alternatives. It would not prove to be easy. Both brought mountains of charts and other presentation materials, and after two days of disputation, there was a deadlock. It was, like many decisions, to be left to Gardiner. He spent the Christmas holidays studying fifteen pounds of reports, and by the New Year he had shifted from his previous inclination toward Jones’ ‘U’ route to a full-throated endorsement of the TTC’s favoured alternative. The council, inevitably, followed suit and the matter was decided.⁹⁵

The decision to respect its counsel over Metro’s professional planners seemed to portend a renewal of the TTC’s independence. It was not to be. Though Gardiner had favoured the TTC’s

⁹³ Duncan, “Bloor-University-Danforth Subway/Bloor-Queen ‘U’ Subway: Final Discussion with Metro Planning Staff.”

⁹⁴ Edward C. Banfield, “Ends and Means In Planning.”

⁹⁵ Clare, “The Hectic Story of Canada’s Subway”; “City Council Behind Bloor Subway Line Blame 3 for Delay,” *Toronto Daily Star*, October 1, 1957.

plan on the merits, it was his decision and he had no interest in relinquishing Metro's authority if it was going to be writing the cheques for new transit infrastructure. As Lamport accurately assessed, the TTC, by then, was "just a rubber stamp for Fred Gardiner's decisions."⁹⁶

Once the route had been decided, the challenge was corralling the suburban councillors behind the subway project, and behind paying 60% of its cost from the Metro budget. By late 1957, the City of Toronto's council, theretofore somewhat divided, was unanimously in support.⁹⁷ However, suburban support was still less universally enthusiastic, seemingly setting the stage for a classic city-suburban battle. Reeve Marie Curtis of the tiny streetcar suburb of Long Branch was among the most vocal opponents, and was no stranger to strong rhetoric. "Hitler also tried to stamp out people for what they believed," she once declared in reference to her opposition to the subway project, "but he didn't succeed."⁹⁸ She believed that her community would see little benefit from the new subway line, and bristled at the idea that it would be funded by her constituents' taxes while they had to pay a double fare to ride downtown.⁹⁹ This was in striking contrast to the form of debate in the United States at the time. Suburban municipalities there weren't asked to pay for urban transit in the 1950s, and therefore had little ability to ask for their service or fares to be improved.

Gardiner produced a 4,500-word memorandum to council, in which he laid out all of the arguments for the subway, which set off fourteen hours of heated debate. Accusations were hurled about, decrying the unfairness to the suburbs and the perilous expense. Reeve Albert Campbell of Scarborough joined Marie Curtis and other suburbanites to oppose the project unless they first

⁹⁶ *The Telegram*, April 28, 1960 cited in Colton, 168.

⁹⁷ "City Council Behind Bloor Subway Line Blame 3 for Delay."

⁹⁸ Jamie Bradburn, "Historicist: Opposing the Subway," *Torontoist*, May 11, 2013, <https://torontoist.com/2013/05/historicist-opposing-the-subway/>.

⁹⁹ "Seek to Delay Subway; 'Bamboozle' Feared," *Toronto Daily Star*, February 27, 1958.

secured a commitment to a Metro-wide flat fare. Ford Brand, a Toronto controller, opposed the project on cost grounds. John Clare in *Maclean's* wrote that despite his labour union background, Brand had "a manner, when faced with civic expenditure, that suggests a branch-bank manager listening to an old horseplayer's application for a loan." Even Nathan Phillips, ostensibly the subway's strongest supporter, became a stumbling block when he refused to support a commercial property surtax—"a nasty word," as he described it—to fund the subway, and also objected to Gardiner's demand for a binding commitment that the city would rezone the predominantly low-rise residential neighbourhoods 1,000 feet on either side of the route for high-density redevelopment. Phillips preferred to borrow the entire cost. "Let it be paid by future generations," he proposed. "The ones without a vote," Gardiner retorted.¹⁰⁰ Clare described the dispute as an example of Phillips' "well-known reluctance to take any legislative action that might make the voters annoyed with him."¹⁰¹

Gardiner, however, was not going to take no for an answer. "If you got a transfusion from me today, you'd freeze to death," he said ominously.¹⁰² But his victory was a classic demonstration of the art of political horse-trading. Albert Campbell's support was bought with an ambiguous promise of future considerations for his borough, a promise Gardiner certainly had the power to keep. Nathan Phillips characteristically wilted under Gardiner's glare. Ford Brand was placated with a modest increase in the TTC's share of the project's costs. With a keen eye on the negative impact to his future mayoral ambitions from opposition to a project that was very popular in the

¹⁰⁰ "Gardiner Calls Phillips Biggest Subway Blockade," *Toronto Daily Star*, February 5, 1958; Alden Baker, "No Surtax, No Subway! Gardiner's Warning," *The Globe and Mail*, March 18, 1958; "Our Duty This Hour To Build Subway On Bloor--Gardiner," *Toronto Daily Star*, March 18, 1958.

¹⁰¹ Clare, "The Hectic Story of Canada's Subway."

¹⁰² Ronald Haggart, "Metropolitan Toronto: It's a Frederick Gardiner Subway," *The Globe and Mail*, March 20, 1958.

City of Toronto, he decided to accept “the will of council,” as he put it. Gardiner’s demand for blanket upzoning was not taken up, to his subsequent irritation, but the City did rezone many areas, particularly in the central part of the route. Gardiner’s refusal to budge on the flat TTC fare, the nearly \$4 million annual cost of which he deemed unacceptable, left Marie Curtis obdurately opposed. But by half-past-midnight, he had carried the day, with a vote of 18-2. “It’s a Frederick Gardiner Subway,” declared *Globe and Mail* opinion writer Ronald Haggart.¹⁰³

Even with Metro Council on side, the project was impossible without the assent of Leslie Frost. Even just to borrow the funds required, the provincial cabinet would need to give permission, which was quickly obtained. A bigger challenge was overcoming the premier’s disinclination to provide provincial support for transit. Gardiner knew that direct operating funding support was out of the question, not least because it would mean the need for the province to provide similar funding to all the municipalities across Ontario.¹⁰⁴ Capital funding was seemingly no more readily available, but Gardiner did not stop lobbying his old friend. Finally, in 1961, he broke through and Frost agreed to provide a \$60 million loan, at cost, for the subway project. This allowed Metro to avoid flooding the municipal loan market and to pay a lower interest rate, which enabled completion of the project to be accelerated by three years, from 1969 to 1966.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ “Choose Bloor-University Route: Approve East-West Subway, Finance Metro Share With Two-Mill Surtax,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 19, 1958; Haggart, “Metropolitan Toronto”; “Bloor Rezoning Held Essential By Gardiner,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 9, 1958; “Demand by Gardiner For Bloor Rezoning Termed Unrealistic,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 7, 1958; “Subway to Confusion,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 30, 1965; William Hanrahan, “Crowding Along the Route: East-West Subway Will Affect New Apartment Building Locations,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 25, 1965.

¹⁰⁴ “Suburbs Put Up Battle But Grant of \$2,500,000 to TTC Is Passed 11 to 6”; “Open Letter: Proposal For Two Diagonal Subway Routes,” Civic Affairs (Bureau of Municipal Research, October 18, 1955), Fonds: 1003, Series: 973, Subseries: 7, Box: 145429, File: 1, City of Toronto Archives.

¹⁰⁵ “Frost Will Lend Metro \$60 Million for Subway,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 5, 1961; “Gardiner, Frost to Discuss Subway Loan,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 1961.

By 1965, the cost of the project had risen to \$277.7 million. Metro would contribute \$195.5 million. Of that amount, \$86.7 million would be obtained through a two-mill property tax levy, \$9.3 million by the sale of surplus lands, and \$21.4 million from provincial subsidy. The remaining \$78 million would be borrowed and paid back out of general Metro revenues. To reduce the interest rate paid, \$60 million of the Metro debentures were purchased by the province, while \$29.5 million was borrowed through a federal program (of which 25% was expected to be forgiven). The TTC was expected to pay back \$82.2 million in additional Metro borrowing out of its farebox.¹⁰⁶

Some respected local transit industry figures, including Richard Soberman, Wilson's heir as Toronto's transportation guru, have suggested that Gardiner and Metro erred in choosing the Bloor-Danforth alignment over the "Big 'U'" because it forced the large number of riders destined to the financial district, especially in the peak period, to transfer.¹⁰⁷ Over time, this has led to serious crowding on both the Yonge line south of Bloor, and in particular at the Bloor-Yonge transfer station. These criticisms are well-argued and indisputable, but the advantages of the Bloor-Danforth alignment outweighed the pitfalls. A 'U' alignment would have created a very radial system, ideal for peak period commuters to the financial district, but at enormous cost to the utility of the broader network. Bloor-Danforth served downtown-bound riders imperfectly but adequately, while also providing a very well-placed and direct route for the large proportion of riders who are not destined for downtown. As Jane Jacobs and activists David and Nadine Nowlan once wrote, "The Yonge and Bloor-Danforth lines have been successes because they are 18-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week lines," rather than primarily commuter routes.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Goldenberg, "Report of The Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto," 45.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Wickens, "What Has Gone Wrong since the 'Golden Age' of Toronto Transit," *The Globe and Mail*, March 16, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Jane Jacobs, Nadine Nowlan, and David Nowlan, "Keeping Track of Downsview Subway," *The Globe and Mail*, February 1, 1972.

Choosing the ‘U’ would have been an avowal of fatalism—an admission that the transit system could serve as little more than a means of relieving rush-hour highway congestion. The choice of the Bloor-Danforth alignment maintained the TTC as a true, anywhere-to-anywhere transit system, rather than simply a conduit for suburban commuters to downtown.

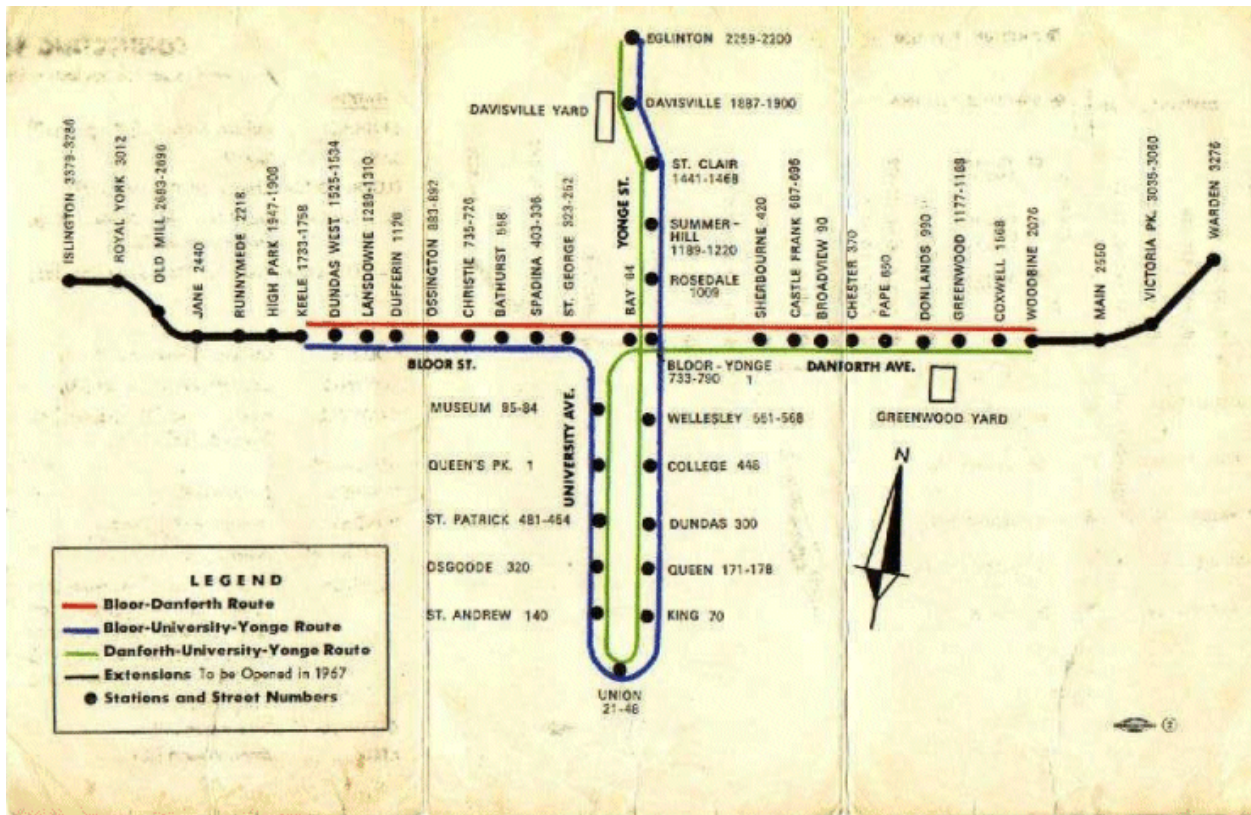


Figure 7: TTC Interlining Plan¹⁰⁹

Many of the problems with the current arrangement were, moreover, entirely avoidable. The TTC designed the system on the assumption that both Yonge and Bloor-Danforth would be operated as a single interlined route, with trains from the Bloor-Danforth route turning to run south on University Avenue and then looping back north onto the existing Yonge line. This complex approach came at considerable inconvenience to operations, since it meant that delays at any point quickly spread to the whole system. Richard Soberman, Wilson’s heir as Toronto’s transit

¹⁰⁹ Source: Transit Toronto, <http://www.transit.toronto.on.ca>

engineering guru, has said that it also provoked significant objections from subway operators, since many of them ended up being forced to finish their shifts at a different station than where they started.¹¹⁰ Interlining was abandoned after only a few months of operation, in favour of operating the Bloor-Danforth and Yonge-University corridors as entirely separate lines. Because the TTC had expected that most riders would just stay on their trains to ride downtown along University rather than transferring, the Yonge-Bloor interchange station was built with platforms of standard width. With hindsight, the station platforms could have been built much wider, mitigating crowding issues and allowing for wider staircases between levels, and it could have even included the “Spanish solution” in which there are platforms on both sides of the train so that both sets of doors can be used simultaneously. The Yonge line station eventually had its platform widened in the early 1990s, but designing it for heavy transfer loads from the outset could have also allowed the station to be shifted further north, so that riders were not dumped onto the far northern end of the platform as they are today. The Bloor-Danforth line station retains its original narrow island, which is plainly inadequate, but with better foresight the platform could have been built as wide as needed to accommodate the transferring crowds.

St. George station, where the University line meets the Bloor-Danforth, offered even greater possibilities since both were designed and built simultaneously. The two stations are already stacked and parallel, so it would have been trivial to adjust the track alignment so that the vast majority of transferring passengers (eastbound to southbound and westbound to northbound) would simply have to walk across the platform rather than needing to crowd onto the stairs. This layout is common practice at many subway interchange stations, like Lionel-Groulx in Montreal or Mehringdamm in Berlin.

¹¹⁰ Richard M. Soberman, interview by author, June 12, 2019.

The planners of the day also could not have foreseen that an east-west subway through the downtown core would not be built soon after. If anything, they were likely anticipating that the choice of a Bloor-Danforth alignment would make a Queen subway inevitable soon after. The latter remained on the books for decades, but was continually postponed in favour of other projects or as a result of funding scarcity. Given ongoing crowding, the project has been revived in the 21st century, but remains unbuilt.

The Bloor-Danforth subway also pioneered the immensely successful TTC model of directly integrating a bus terminal into subway stations, so that passengers transferring to and from connecting bus routes do not need to pass through any fare gates and can wait in relatively weather protected comfort. While the Yonge subway included a few of these terminals at its northern stations, the Bloor-Danforth project solidified the standard with their inclusion at most stations—a model that would be continued into the twenty-first century. This approach, cited by both Mees and Cervero as key to Toronto’s transit success, makes connecting between modes both much more convenient and much more intuitive.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Mees, *Transport for Suburbia*, 173; Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 84.



Figure 8: TTC Subway Station Bus Terminal¹¹²

Months after his subway victory, Gardiner provoked considerable shock by announcing his retirement, at the height of his powers. A series of illnesses had taken their toll, and he cleared out his desk at the modest Metro headquarters—soon to be replaced by a futuristic new structure shared with the City of Toronto that was a fitting symbol of the political changing of the guard—in January of 1962. He returned to a thriving business career, and rarely again involved himself in municipal politics, aside from commentaries on the structure of metropolitan government as its reform was periodically contemplated. A telling exception was in 1963, when he successfully lobbied the new premier, John Robarts—this time with the help of the old transit sceptic, Leslie Frost—for what he had never been able to obtain when in office: direct grants for subway

¹¹² Image Source: Vik Pakhwa, <https://vikpakwa.com/20140522-waiting-for-a-bus-on-ttcs-modernist-finch-subway-station-bus-platform-toronto-c-1974/>.

construction. Metro was to receive one third of the cost of roadbed construction, excluding items like track, rolling stock, and stations. The curious formula was because the grants were issued under the existing highway funding legislation—the roadbed was considered to be equivalent to a highway. The amounts were modest—the *Star*'s coverage emphasized that it wouldn't even avert a fare hike—but the precedent was monumental.¹¹³ It was the first time the province had directly funded transit, and it would certainly not be the last.

It was a long way from the old vision of transit as a self-sustaining business, which Gardiner had abandoned with little chagrin. First, he had guided Metro Council, and secured provincial assent, to provide a modest subsidy to operations for the enhancement of service while avoiding a fare increase. Then, he secured support for funding the majority of the cost of a new subway from the Metro tax base, unlike its predecessor, which was supposed to be funded by the TTC's farebox. As a result, the idea that government needed to fund transit in order to keep it competitive with the automobile would spread to the point that even operations would come to be regularly subsidized, again with Metro first jumping in and then the province following.

The precedent established by these policies put in place during the early years of Metro, most notably the decision to subsidize so transit could continue expanding to compete with the automobile in newly developed areas, was vital to the survival of transit in its darkest hour. TTC ridership reached its nadir in the late 1950s and after that it stabilized and then began a steady rise. By contrast, even New York's subway ridership continued to decline until 1977; in other cities,

¹¹³ Letter from Frederick Gardiner to Leslie M. Frost, March 5, 1963, Leslie M. Frost Fonds, Trent University Archives. "Tenth Annual Report" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1963), Toronto Transit Commission Fonds, City of Toronto Archive; "Will Hasten Completion, Allen Says," *The Globe and Mail*, March 29, 1963; "Allen Claims Grant Will Ease Tax Load," *The Globe and Mail*, March 29, 1963; "TTC Fares Are Going Up--Day," *Toronto Daily Star*, March 29, 1963.

the decline was even more precipitous.¹¹⁴ Gardiner had effectively threaded the needle. He secured approval of the new subway through implicit promises of improved service and lower fares for suburban areas, both of which were implemented in the following years. In so doing, he set the stage for the region's transit revival.

Certainly, Gardiner was no perfect friend of transit. Any observer could find numerous quotations with full-throated endorsements of new highways. He delayed Bloor-Danforth subway construction for the early years of Metro while his first two expressway projects were built—he was always very conservative in the amount he permitted the Metro Council to borrow for projects, and the demand in the early years for funding for all sorts of construction, ranging from schools to sewage treatment plants, was near-inexhaustible.¹¹⁵ Throughout the period, though, he was pressuring the higher levels of government for funding out of their more diverse tax bases—municipalities were limited almost exclusively to the property tax—with limited success. He eventually proceeded with the project anyway, in 1957, and a few years later, his lobbying helped secure the funds from the province needed to accelerate construction.

Gardiner was also certainly not alone in his advocacy for transit. McBrien had done much to establish the credibility of the TTC as a well-run organization, and to make the case for subway construction. Many of the members of Metro Council from the City of Toronto long favoured subway projects, as did newspapers like the liberal *Toronto Daily Star*, which hectored Gardiner for delays and prevarications on subway construction throughout the 1950s.¹¹⁶ There were also various community organizations supporting transit expansion and lobbying for provincial

¹¹⁴ Mitchell L. Moss et al., “Subway Ridership, 1975-2015” (NYU Rudin Center for Transportation, March 2017), <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/faculty/publications/State%20of%20Subway%20Ridership%20-%20Mar717.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 111–17; “Who Is To Blame For Subway Shilly-Shallying,” *Toronto Daily Star*, September 14, 1957, sec. Editorial.

¹¹⁶ “Who Is To Blame For Subway Shilly-Shallying.”

funding, many of them cultivated by McBrien over many years.¹¹⁷ The Property Owners Association of Toronto, for example, adopted a resolution in 1956 calling for a plan to avoid “the unnecessary extravagance of expressways which past experience has shown simply to end up in a shifting of traffic bottlenecks from one place to another.”¹¹⁸ It was Gardiner, however, with his uniquely forceful personality, his close ties to the provincial government and Conservative establishment, and his reputation for fiscal probity, who had the power and credibility to prevent transit expansion from being starved for funds or bogged down in endless city-suburban discord.

Despite his contributions to transit, Gardiner is best known for the expressway projects he championed. Two were built on his watch, and though they radiated from downtown to the west and northeast, these projects were low-hanging fruit in expressway terms, being located in an undeveloped river valley and along the then-largely-industrial lakeshore. They required minimal land clearance. The remainder of the expressway plans were far more destructive, requiring hacking through established residential neighbourhoods with Robert Moses’ proverbial meat-axe. By far the most famous was the Spadina Expressway, which was to cut through a historic neighbourhood home to much of the city’s intelligentsia, including none other than Jane Jacobs. He pushed its approval through council as one of his last acts, though construction on its destructive urban section hadn’t even begun a decade later. Spadina is perhaps better seen as a last vestige of his earlier highway-oriented views. His speeches clearly argued that transit provided better return on investment than highways, yet he still maintained that the initial network of expressways—one of the main reasons for the formation of the Metro government in the first place—was essential. Though his true thought process is impossible to ascertain conclusively,

¹¹⁷ Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 131–32; “Open Letter: Proposal For Two Diagonal Subway Routes.”

¹¹⁸ “Resolution No. 4: Traffic Plan” (Property Owners Association of Toronto, May 9, 1956), Municipal Administration Correspondence Files - TTC (RG19-43), Archives of Ontario.

Gardiner may have been unwilling to discard the highway plans that had been a key impetus for the creation of his metropolitan government, even though he had come to question the value of expressway construction.

Gardiner delayed, leaving Spadina's approval to the last days before his retirement, and the other highway projects deferred to a later date. These were hardly the acts of a self-proclaimed "bulldozer" who wanted to get them built at all costs. Gardiner—tribune of small businesses and homeowners—balked at the idea of displacing thousands of members of his base. In the end, none of the expressways were completed after the original two. Gardiner's plans for transit expansion survived him, but his expressway plans did not.¹¹⁹

Though his views were radically pro-transit for his time, this is not how he is remembered in the literature. Perhaps it is too difficult to imagine a cigar-chomping Conservative Orange businessman with the nickname of "Big Daddy" as a pro-transit, anti-car radical. It is perhaps more comfortable to classify him with Robert Moses and other apostles of the automobile.

Local transit engineer-turned-writer Ed Levy, in his book examining the history of Toronto transit plans, summarizes his role simply: "During the mid-1950s Gardiner sparred memorably and incessantly with Toronto Mayor Allan Lamport, a tireless proponent of early implementation of the east-west Bloor-Danforth subway. This was in opposition to the former's unerring support for first completing key sections of a U.S.-style urban freeway (expressway) network for the newly constituted metropolitan corporation."¹²⁰ This choice to ignore Gardiner's reversal, and therefore much of Gardiner's legacy, has gravely distorted Toronto's understanding of its own urban history,

¹¹⁹ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 165; "Proposed Don Valley Parkway," October 1955, Clerk Files, City of Toronto Archive.

¹²⁰ Levy, *Rapid Transit in Toronto: A Century of Plans, Projects, Politics and Paralysis*, 86.

which tends to embrace an American-style Manichaeian struggle between transit-opposing suburbanites and transit-supporting urbanites.

Prominent local urbanist, writer, and politician John Sewell scarcely mentions Gardiner in his seminal book *The Shape of the City*, which has profoundly shaped the way Toronto views its planning of that era. Instead, Sewell claims that suburban politicians, with whom Gardiner would certainly be included, were opposed to transit expansion. "City politicians found (almost to their surprise) that their preferred transportation option, public transit, was not readily supported by their counterparts in the suburbs."¹²¹ He wrote in 1978 that public transit was "one of those great discoveries that progressives in local politics have made in the last dozen years," ignoring that Gardiner, not someone that he would have considered a progressive, had been promoting transit for a decade longer.¹²²

Sewell should be quoted at length, as his view precisely encapsulates the conventional wisdom about transit in Toronto. "The city built before the Second World War was just about perfect for public transit," in terms of built form, street grid, density, and mixed uses. "The modern suburb, by contrast, was not so amenable to transit. Low densities produced few potential riders for each mile travelled," and long journeys and a discontinuous road system made transit route planning challenging. "As a result, the rational suburban resident used a private car for transportation needs," he declared. This dissertation will establish that Toronto's suburbs have managed to generate substantial ridership despite imperfect land use, and the hundreds of thousands of Toronto suburbanites who use transit every day would no doubt be startled to discover their irrationality. Sewell fixated on a simple dichotomy between suburbanites and urbanites—

¹²¹ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 216.

¹²² Sewell, "Public Transit in Canada: A Primer."

“Suburban politicians wanted public money put into roads, whereas city politicians preferred transit”—even though there are countless examples of suburban politicians, Gardiner foremost among them, agitating for transit system expansion.¹²³ From suburbanites, many Toronto transit advocates refused to take yes for an answer. Their understanding of their own city was, seemingly, more shaped by the literature on the decline of transit in the United States than on observation of what was actually happening a few kilometres away.

Popular memory of Gardiner is much the same. In *The Globe and Mail*'s lengthy obituary after his death in 1983, his catalytic role in the construction of the Bloor-Danforth subway, a project similar in scale to the St. Lawrence Seaway, was entirely ignored. By contrast, ample space was given to his support of highway projects. The only mention of transit at all was to state—in the last substantive paragraph of the article—that he was “an early advocate of the development of the commuter rail system.”¹²⁴ Likewise, the *Toronto Star*'s obituaries made not a mention of his role in transit, other than to note a quotation—“You can't derrick the people out of their automobiles and put them on the subway”—without mentioning the following sentence, in which Gardiner argued that drivers had to be coaxed out of their cars with good transit service instead.¹²⁵ A 1992 retrospective on Gardiner's death in the *Star* described his legacy as encompassing his eponymous expressway “and many others like the Don Valley Parkway, the Metro police force, an amalgamated parks system and public works projects such as pumping plants, roads and sewers.” Transit merited not a mention.¹²⁶ In 2012, long-time Toronto journalist and transit expert

¹²³ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 216.

¹²⁴ Alden Baker, “Frederick Goldwin Gardiner: Metro Steered for 8 Years by First Chairman of Council,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 23, 1983, sec. Ontario.

¹²⁵ “Metro's First Chairman ‘a Municipal Churchill,’” *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1983; “Gardiner Left Us Metro Today,” *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1983, sec. Editorials/Opinions.

¹²⁶ “Frederick Gardiner 1895-1983: Toronto's Big Daddy,” *Toronto Star*, November 1, 1992, sec. Feature.

Stephen Wickens wrote a retrospective on the opening of the Bloor-Danforth-University subway, and described Gardiner as a figure who “would prefer that expressways get priority” over the subway.¹²⁷

Only Gardiner’s biographer, Timothy Colton, and Francis Frisken, a York University professor of urban studies, have written of Gardiner’s role in the region’s transit system. Even Colton, who, unlike most, writes favourably of Gardiner’s role in transit, writes that he didn’t do nearly enough to make transit strong. But in the North American context, Toronto distantly outpaced its American counterparts.

As Caro showed, a single individual with a talent for accumulating power and a reputation for expertise could profoundly shape an urban region in the era of rational planning. While Moses used his power to marginalize public transportation in favour of the automobile, Gardiner saw the weaknesses of a car-dominated transportation system, and, to as great an extent as could have been possible for a single individual, directed Toronto onto a different path.

The 1950s and early 1960s were a period of transit collapse in much of North America. Transit system after transit system faced financial crisis as a result of a vicious cycle of declining revenues, fare hikes, service cuts, and disappearing ridership. Gardiner used the power of the new metropolitan system, which he had helped to create, in order to arrest that cycle in Toronto. He won over sceptics, both urban and suburban, to the idea of subsidizing transit to avoid the need for radical fare increases and to permit expansion of transit service into the suburbs. Later, he secured the support of his council and, through his unique lobbying power, the provincial government for the construction and funding of a major new subway expansion. Gardiner had shared the

¹²⁷ Stephen Wickens, “Transit Lessons from the Past: The University-Bloor-Danforth Subway Was Accomplished on Budget, without Provincial Funds. Is Such a Feat Possible Now?,” *Toronto Star*, February 4, 2012, sec. Insight.

fascination with highways and other emblems of modernity, and the old conservative businessman had long believed in the importance of the TTC's fiscal self-sustainability. At the decisive moment, however, he set aside these beliefs in favour of embracing transit as a long-term solution to the region's transportation problems. In so doing, he allowed the TTC to survive its most perilous years, and set the stage for the unprecedented transit revival in the following decades.

Chapter 4: TTC in the Early Years of Metro

“We found that if you wait until you have an overall plan for everything you will wind up with nothing,” Chairman Gardiner said in an address on Metro’s progress in 1958.¹ This encapsulated the approach to transit that Metro pursued in the early years. There was no comprehensive plan that guided the expansion of transit into the suburbs—such a plan would not come until the following decade, and relatively little of it was put into effect. Instead, the expansion took place as a result of a series of incremental, generally political decisions to equalize service and fares throughout the TTC’s newly expanded service area.

Torontonians in the early years of Metro viewed transit as a public service. Suburbanites with little transit access viewed themselves as being cheated out of a public amenity to which they were entitled. Americans, at that time, viewed transit instead as a business. It was expected to operate profitably, and if it did not, it was the fault of the private sector monopolists who often owned the transit system. The public subsidization of transit was seen as a last resort, and all efforts were usually made to ensure that such subsidy was kept to a minimum—not least by minimizing service to new suburbs, which was expected to be unremunerative. This sent many American transit systems into a vicious spiral of declining ridership, service cuts, and fare increases to make up lost revenue. A genuinely regional approach to transit would not come for decades after the 1950s suburban boom in most American metropolitan areas—far too late for transit, as there was little left for the regional government to administer, and suburbanites had established firmly auto-oriented travel patterns.

¹ Frederick G. Gardiner, “Metro’s Progress 1958.”

Transit in the 1950s was an aging, declining industry—one that, to many, was to be relegated by the automobile to the same fate as the horse and buggy. The decaying, crowded streetcars of the war years generated little nostalgia. As Lewis Mumford wrote in 1958, “The current objection to mass transportation comes chiefly from the fact that it has been allowed to decay: this lapse itself reflects the general blight of the central areas. In order to maintain profits, or in many cases to reduce deficits, rates have been raised, services have decreased, and equipment has become obsolete, without being replaced and improved.”² Since the 1980s, the effects of speculator-driven short-termism on American business has become a frequent topic of academic and popular discussion.³ As early as the 1950s, however, the transit business was prey to corporate raiders, like Louis Wolfson and O. Roy Chalk, whose tactics of extracting capital from undervalued businesses in declining industries would be quite familiar to raiders of a later generation, like Carl Icahn and Frank Lorenzo. Burdened with ownership that had limited interest in the social role of transit, as well as by the debt often accumulated to pay for their acquisition, many American transit companies were in a poor position to compete with federally funded expressways, and to expand their services to the areas where most population growth was occurring.

² Mumford, “The Highway and the City.”

³ Kevin J. Laverty, “Economic ‘Short-Termism’: The Debate, The Unresolved Issues, and The Implications for Management Practice and Research,” *Academy of Management Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1, 1996): 825–60; David Marginson and Laurie McAulay, “Exploring the Debate on Short-Termism: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis,” *Strategic Management Journal* 29, no. 3 (2008): 273–92; Lynne Dallas, “Short-Termism, the Financial Crisis, and Corporate Governance,” *School of Law: Faculty Scholarship* 29 (2011), https://digital.sandiego.edu/law_fac_works/29; Lynn A. Stout, *The Shareholder Value Myth: How Putting Shareholders First Harms Investors, Corporations, and the Public* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2012); Rana Foroohar, *Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business* (New York: Crown Business, 2016).

In Toronto, by contrast, the TTC had been in public hands since the 1920s. After 1954, it was controlled by an ambitious and forward-looking new metropolitan government that was investing heavily in new infrastructure and for which the transit system was one of its keystone services. Nevertheless, the TTC's turnaround was not immediately apparent. Transit ridership continued to decline into the 1960s, reaching its post-Depression nadir in 1961. The turning of the decade, however, marked a turning point for transit. The change came slowly, almost imperceptibly at first. The parades and concerts marking the opening of the Yonge Subway had not been able to arrest the tide of declining ridership, at least outside the new line's narrow corridor, and pessimism reigned—not least among the expert planners.

As the *Star* wrote in a 1958 editorial, "If subways are built, will the people use them?" the editorial asked. "The planning board staff answers with an emphatic 'no'," citing the recent decline in TTC ridership and similar experiences in American cities. They argued that auto ownership and low suburban population density would depress transit ridership and, incorrectly as it turned out, they forecasted flat ridership in the years to follow.⁴ It was entirely in keeping with the dominant planning ideas of the time, as implemented by experts like Robert Moses, Ed Bacon, Harland Bartholomew, and others, all of whom were cynical about transit's enduring viability in an era where most families could afford a car. But the *Star*, citing Wilson and the TTC, pointed out that the Yonge Subway disproves their case, in a striking example of observation coming into conflict with theory. While the planning experts suggested that nothing could draw people out of their cars, the TTC aptly pointed out that the Yonge Subway had resulted in a 44%

⁴ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "Report on East-West Rapid Transit and Expressway: Part I (Analysis and Recommendations)" (Toronto: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, July 1957).

increase in the share of transit's share of traffic from the north during peak hours, while automobile traffic had declined by 1.6%. At the same time, transit traffic from the east, which was served only by streetcars, declined while the number of cars rose. A network of ubiquitous subways could not be the savior of transit, however, as no new lines were scheduled for completion until the late 1960s. Even then, most of Metro would remain beyond the reach of the subway system.⁵

The enhancement of suburban transit was a vexing problem for the TTC. On the one hand, the TTC perceived its fiscal self-sustainability as the cornerstone of its institutional independence, and new services in relatively low-density and auto-oriented areas were considered to be a financial burden that could require subsidy, which would in turn provide space for political interference in the Commission's operations. On the other hand, with the suburban municipalities coming to house the majority of the Metro population, and given their representatives' power on Metro Council, outright rejection of suburbanites' demands for more favourable transit policy could result in Metro Council, with provincial support, acting to erode or even abolish the TTC's legislated autonomy. The effort to strike the correct balance to serve the TTC's institutional interests would guide the Commission's actions throughout the first years of Metro.

Initially, the TTC followed William McBrien's policy of very cautious growth, but as suburban pressure grew and the TTC's independence was imperiled, the TTC relented and implemented an aggressive expansion of suburban service. When the new routes' ridership and financial performance significantly exceeded expectations, the stage was set for ever-larger expansions of suburban transit service.

⁵ "Subways: Metro's Billion Dollar Issue."

The success of transit expansion came despite many obstacles. Metro was investing heavily in steadily widening and connecting its arterial roads, as well as in building its first expressways. The latter received 50 percent provincial funding—not quite the 90 percent available from the federal government in the United States under the Interstate Highway Act, but still sufficient to get many projects underway. The Lakeshore—later Gardiner—Expressway ran, as its initial name indicated, along the lake shore connecting the Queen Elizabeth Way, which ran from Hamilton to an abrupt end at the western limits of the City of Toronto, to the downtown core. Construction began in 1955, as one of the new metropolitan government’s first major projects, and it was completed in 1964.⁶ The Don Valley Parkway, approved in 1958, ran northeast from a connection with the Gardiner at the southeastern corner of downtown to the Highway 401 bypass across the northern edge of the urban area. It opened in stages from 1961 to 1966.⁷ The two expressways were intended to be the first phases of a comprehensive grid of expressways across Metro, including a full loop around the downtown core.

Planners to the present day have consistently maintained the importance of land use on transit ridership, but Toronto offered few signs for optimism there either. As writer and former mayor of Toronto John Sewell described, "Without exception, development stuck within the precepts of modern planning. Residential form followed Don Mills," the city’s first and most famous suburban new town.⁸ E.P. Taylor, who

⁶ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "10 Years of Progress: Metropolitan Toronto 1953-1963" (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, June 1963); "Expressway Ceremony Is Traditional, Except for Traffic Jam," *The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1964.

⁷ "Proposed Don Valley Parkway"; "Metro Council Gives Approval To Don Parkway," *The Globe and Mail*, May 24, 1958; "First Part of Don Parkway Open to Traffic Tomorrow," *The Globe and Mail*, August 30, 1961; "Parkway Open to 401 Today," *The Globe and Mail*, November 17, 1966.

⁸ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 201.

controlled Canada's most prominent business conglomerate of the postwar era, Argus Corporation, acquired over two-thousand contiguous acres just to the north-east of the existing city in the Township of North York. He charged prominent international planners with developing plans for the area, and they incorporated all of the dominant planning ideas of the era.⁹ It consisted of four quadrants of single-use residential neighbourhoods on curvilinear streets, centred on a shopping mall at the main arterial intersection. "The curvy streets now seen on maps of Toronto," wrote Sewell, "mark the break in the mid-1950s as the influence of Don Mills becomes apparent, contrasting with the straight residential streets that had predominated until that time." The typical plan consisted of "A ring road around the major arterial intersection, the four corners of which were occupied by shopping centres and often some apartments. Outside the ring was a warren of cul-de-sacs."¹⁰ Future Torontonians Jane Jacobs wrote *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, skewering modernist planning ideals, in 1961, but when the book was released, Toronto's planning still hewed to the Bel Geddes vision of highway-oriented suburbia, with a sprinkling of Corbusian tower-in-a-park modernism. Aside from a modestly higher number of apartments, the new neighbourhoods of Toronto were scarcely different from coeval American suburbia.

⁹ White, *Planning Toronto*, 103–5.

¹⁰ Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 201–2.



Figure 9: Don Mills¹¹



Figure 10: Levittown, New York¹²

This shift to auto-oriented land use—straight out of General Motors’ Futurama vision of 1939—is borne out in statistics. The new developments, like Don Mills, were far less dense than their prewar counterparts, compounding their more auto-oriented built form. From 1954 to 1964, suburban population and employment both nearly doubled, while the population of the prewar city was constant and employment declined slightly;

¹¹ Image Source: Toronto Star

¹² Image Source: The New York Times

over the same period, commuting to downtown dropped from 55% to 40% of work trips.¹³ While this flattening of central business district employment came somewhat later than in the United States, where it had been happening for the preceding three decades, by the 1950s, Toronto employment was also rapidly suburbanizing.¹⁴ The turnaround in transit ridership occurred at the very time that land use was ostensibly becoming less clement for transit.

Review of the history of TTC ridership demonstrates that the opening of the Yonge Subway in 1954 did not permanently reverse the steady decline in transit ridership. Was the TTC's turnaround due to the opening of the second subway on Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue in 1966? Figure 10 clearly demonstrates that the turn of the trend from decline to rapid ridership increase occurred several years earlier, in 1963. What event occurred in that year that would so dramatically alter the trend of the city's transit? The key event of 1963 was an expansion of the TTC's bus service, subsidized by the metropolitan government in a political compromise with the fast-growing suburbs, which established a grid of routes along the old concession roads that had become the arterial backbone of the fast-growing new suburbs.

¹³ Eli Comay, "The Toronto Transit Commission and the Metropolitan Corporation: An Appraisal" (Rail Transit Group Conference of the American Transit Association, Toronto, 1966).

¹⁴ Murray Jones, "Some Economic and Social Aspects of Modern Metropolitan (Toronto) Man" (H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh's Second Commonwealth Study Conference on the Human Consequences of the Changing Industrial Environment in the Commonwealth and Empire, Toronto, 1962).

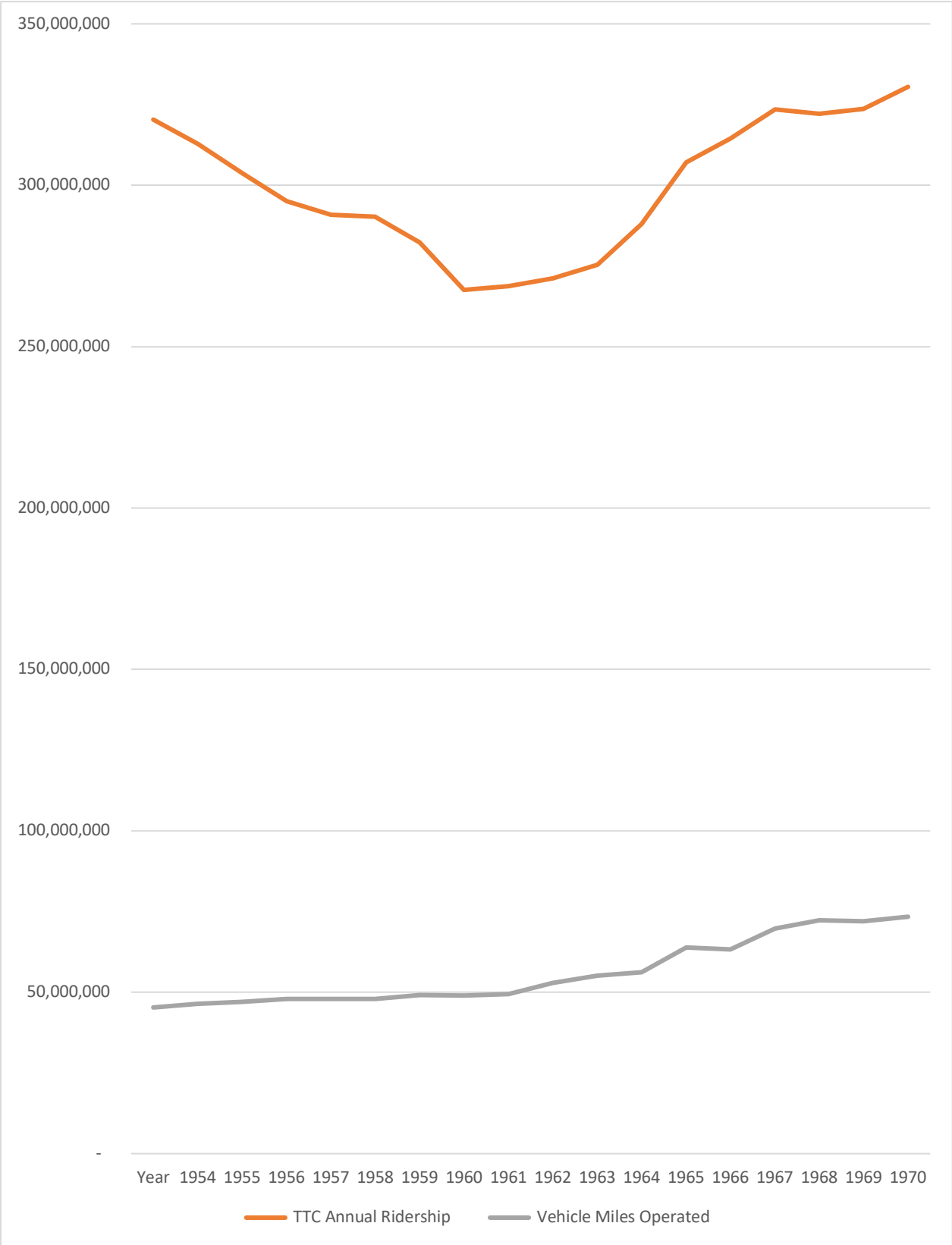


Figure 11: TTC Annual Ridership and Service

This stood Toronto in sharp contrast to its postwar peers. In the early 1960s, San Francisco's Municipal Railway and DC Transit remained confined within the fully developed prewar cities. While transit service, such as the Key System in the East Bay, some DC Transit streetcar routes in Maryland, and private buses lines in Virginia, was available within the earlier prewar suburbs outside the city limits, their financially straitened private operators were scarcely in a position to open many money-losing new routes in the new suburbs. This left most of the fastest growing American communities of the early 1960s with literally no transit service at all. Even where service was in place, it was very limited, commuter-oriented service to take office workers from suburbs to their jobs downtown—all other trips were assumed to be taken in the family car.

In Toronto, the TTC not only ran buses into the new world of strip malls and cul-de-sacs—it developed a comprehensive grid of routes that enabled not only trips downtown, but also cross-suburban trips. When Metropolitan Toronto expanded the TTC's bus service to create a comprehensive network in the new suburbs, it created a surge in ridership that continued steadily for nearly three decades. As the subway was slowly expanded into the suburbs, it was embedded within a network of already busy surface transit routes that could dramatically extend the catchment area of its stations. With little fanfare, and over the continuing objections of many who had the best interests of the TTC in their hearts, this move created a city with heavy transit use, even in areas with land use that would have been written off as entirely unsuitable for transit in just about every American city.

In the 1950s in Toronto, transit service was still viewed by suburbanites as something worth fighting for. When service was expanded into the suburbs and riders unexpectedly flocked to it, the initial skepticism about the viability of suburban transit

was quickly—though not completely—dispelled. It presaged decades of continuous transit expansion. Transit in many American metropolitan areas, like San Francisco, remains regionally fragmented to this day, with reasonably good service in the historic central city and far more limited service in the surrounding suburban municipalities. Even where transit was regionalized, as in the Washington area, such regionalization came far too late in the 1970s. By then, the existing transit service was hardly the attractive and useful service that Toronto’s suburbanites of the 1950s fought to have extended to their communities. Instead, it was a small, unreliable collection of rusty old buses that were mostly used by those with no other options.¹⁵ Instead of a widespread perception of transit as a useful service, it developed the same negative associations—heavily charged with racism—that were faced by affordable housing. For many suburban communities, transit became something to fight against, instead of fight for. Many suburbanites had left the central cities as part of the process of white flight; they viewed transit as an unwanted link to the minority populations of central cities from which they had fled out of racial animus.¹⁶

At a time when racial animus and segregation were increasingly plaguing most American cities, Toronto was less torn, owing to its homogeneity. Nevertheless, Toronto was far from immune to classism, as demonstrated by the opposition to the first suburban social housing projects in the 1950s. The difference was that transit in the 1950s and early

¹⁵ “Statement of Cleatus Barnett, Chairman, Board of Directors, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority,” § House Committee on the District of Columbia (1974).

¹⁶ Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), 150–78; Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 209–29; Robert Pfaff, “Rhetoric in, Pocket Book Out: A Historical Analysis of Suburban Opt-Out Transportation Funding in Metropolitan Detroit” (ACSP Annual Conference, Greenville, S.C., 2019); Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 188–96.

1960s was not yet associated with the poor and marginalized. Through political maneuvering, and no shortage of good fortune, the TTC was able to avail itself of modest subsidies and expand its service into new suburban neighbourhoods as soon as they were built. This established a pattern and custom of transit ridership that endures into the twenty-first century.

The Toronto Transit Commission

When the new Toronto Transit Commission was established on January 1, 1954, it was charged with three principal responsibilities. First, it was to consolidate and co-ordinate all forms of local transit, with the exception of mainline railways and taxis, and to plan future development of such services. Second, it was charged with establishing new local passenger transportation services in its radically expanded service area, and to make necessary adjustments to existing service. Third, it was to maintain a self-sustaining operation, in part through the establishment of a fare system including zones. The latter two objectives consistently came into conflict, as the need to expand suburban service would affect the Commission's ability to operate without subsidy, and suburban councillors increasingly came to resent the need for their constituents to pay higher fares for what they perceived to be inferior service. More fundamentally, there was general concern, as noted by management consulting firm Woods Gordon & Co. in their 1957 review of the system, that raising fares in pursuit of self-sustainability could drive riders away and imperil that sustainability in the long term. This was a recurrent topic of Gardiner's speeches. In support of those fears, a 1958 report by American consultants

Hawley Simpson and Joe Ong projected a ridership decline of 0.33% for each 1% increase in fares.¹⁷

The TTC's greatest asset in the 1950s was its reputation for financial probity and stable management. McBrien, who died in Metro's first year, had been a revered member of the city's establishment, and had fiercely guarded the Commission's independence from political interference by ensuring that it remained financially self-sustaining. As Harold Kaplan described, McBrien "gained interest group support for the notion that the transportation commission, in order to prosecute a bold, expansionist policy, had to remain independent of the timid and perhaps pro-expressway City councillors." This anxiety about the ideological unfriendliness of councillors would be an enduring institutional characteristic of the TTC. "McBrien's emphasis on an independent and expansionist organization met the demands of all the internal groups: the other commissioners, the technical staff, and the unionized labour force."¹⁸

The TTC embraced the Progressive-era aspiration for technocratic and apolitical administration with fervor. It sought relentlessly to assert and to preserve its autonomy. In his study of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Jameson Doig draws on the work of Phillip Selznick, who argues that the "conflicting demands of autonomy and responsiveness" are especially important in public authorities. At its best, the TTC lived up to Selznick's ideal of establishing external standards for the monitoring of its performance, and an "inner commitment to moral restraint and aspiration."¹⁹ Still, as

¹⁷ "Survey of Toronto Transit Commission," 51–52; Hawley S. Simpson and Joe R. Ong to Allan A. Lamport and Commissioners, Toronto Transit Commission, August 11, 1958, Series 11, File 601, City of Toronto Archives.

¹⁸ Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 132.

¹⁹ Doig, *Empire on the Hudson*, 368–69; Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 342–44.

Richard Hofstadter has argued, the progressive reformers who spawned the public authorities were paradoxically conservative. Their anxiety about the perceived lack of concern on the part of much of the urban proletariat—especially new immigrants—for civic reform and “good government,” and their attraction to political bosses, made the reformers somewhat sceptical of chaotic urban democracy.²⁰

The TTC, in its technocratic approach, was a highly conservative organization. Like most authorities, it was granted formal autonomy and governed primarily by an ostensibly apolitical board of prominent citizens—frequently businessmen. It made decisions on all but the most important issues with little reference to the city’s political leadership or to the citizenry’s concerns. It was founded with the dual objectives of providing high-quality transit service to citizens and of operating on a financially self-sustaining basis. As an organization, it was exceedingly wary of political accountability, which, it was feared, would produce an unreasonable tilt toward the former objective. The TTC viewed its autonomy as essential to the preservation of its financial sustainability. Yet a key reason for its zeal in defending its financial sustainability was a desire to maintain its institutional independence. It is difficult to disentangle these twin motivations.

Alan Lamport, who succeeded McBrien, maintained his predecessor’s policies and outlook, but his style was far more combative. He eagerly engaged in and even sought public battles with Metro Council, with the Planning Board, and with Chairman Gardiner. He viewed all of them as irredeemably anti-transit and pro-expressway. Though there was

²⁰ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 174–85.

some justification for his position, there was also, as we have seen, considerable contradictory evidence.

The TTC rejected the idea of political interference in route planning out of hand. Instead, they used a traditional predict-and-provide approach to service, in which a budget is set at the beginning of the year for how much service in total can be provided across the system. Then, the Research Department studied service need in suburban zones, and the operating divisions determined service needs in the central area, with data obtained from fare receipts. The latter was problematic since it did not count riders who used transfers. The scheduling department then produced a schedule based on the recommendations and the budget. That in turn was approved by the Service Change Committee or, in the case of significant changes, by the Commission itself. While the Commission maintained guidelines for minimum headways or maximum crowding, the guidelines were not strictly applied.²¹ At Gardiner's urging, the TTC agreed to hear requests from the local municipalities, though they did not generally give them significant weight.²²

Though consulting firm Woods Gordon, charged by council to examine the system,²³ had been flattering about its businesslike operations, others, looking at the bigger picture of transit ridership decline, were less sanguine about the TTC's prospects. The *Globe and Mail's* editorial following the report's release recognized the system's financial stability, but noted that "No one reading the report would get any idea of why

²¹ "Survey of Toronto Transit Commission," 23–29.

²² Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 134.

²³ Report No. 28, Executive Committee, Metropolitan Toronto Council, as adopted by Metropolitan Council, June 26, 1956.

the TTC has been subject in recent years to such extreme criticism from the public it serves." Echoing the complaints of suburban members of Metro Council, it pointed out that much of Metro had been left bereft of transit service.²⁴

In spite of—and in part because of—its prudent management, the TTC was feeling the competitive pressure from the automobile. Registrations rose from 152,961 in 1940 to 326,009 in 1954 and by 1960 there were more cars registered in Toronto than households. The explosion of car ownership most severely impacted off-peak ridership. While many would-be automobile commuters to downtown jobs continued to be stymied by a lack of available parking, as Metro's planning commissioner Murray Jones noted in a 1962 address, leisure trips were increasingly shifting to the car. This was an especially vexing problem for transit, since it needed to maintain an infrastructure scaled to the peaks. Jones' remarks indicated the awareness of the problems of automobile transportation at what was seemingly the height of auto-mania, less than a decade after the Interstate Highway Act was passed in the United States and at a time when Metropolitan Toronto was attempting to build its own urban expressway grid. The key problems presented by the automobile to transit, he noted, began with its diversion of passengers from buses and trains, necessitating the curtailing of service or fare increases, which further reduced ridership. Secondly, the tide of automobiles congested the roads that buses and streetcars shared, increasing their cost of operation and hampering their reliability. The third problem, which he described as "most fundamental and least understood," was the role

²⁴ "The Unanswered Question," *The Globe and Mail*, May 1, 1957.

of the car in creating development with insufficient density to support public transit service.²⁵

These factors eroded the TTC's foundation of financial stability, but there was no institutional mechanism to address such an eventuality. Though Cumming's report that led to the creation of Metro had argued "that the underlying liability of the metropolitan area for the provision of possible future deficits in this publicly owned system should be given formal recognition in any legislation," there remained a broad acceptance of the idea that the TTC must remain self-sustaining—not least among the TTC's staff themselves.²⁶ Nevertheless, the commission's ratio of net operating income to gross revenue dropped precipitously from 38% in the monopoly war years from 1940-46, to 12.5% in 1947-53, and 9.5% in 1954-55. Though it recovered to 19.5% in 1956 with fare increases and post-subway ridership growth, the downward trend was unmistakable. The operating profit was also more urgently needed than ever, given the need to service the enormous debt taken on to pay for the Yonge Subway—debenture debt had risen from \$8.6 million in 1947 to \$66.7 million in 1953. There were therefore increasingly frequent exceptions to the self-sustaining rule, from the small operating subsidies to cover deficits in the mid-1950s to the gradual increases in Metro's contributions to capital projects, particularly subways. The latter was the TTC's preferred method of subsidy, since it left their operations free from Metro's interference. As a result, the Woods Gordon report recommended that Metro cover the costs of "the right-of-way for rapid transit service,"

²⁵ "First Annual Report" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1954); Jones, "Some Economic and Social Aspects of Modern Metropolitan (Toronto) Man."

²⁶ Lorne Cumming, "Decisions and Recommendations of the Board" (Toronto: Ontario Municipal Board, January 20, 1953), Archives of Ontario.

meaning the physical infrastructure of new subway lines.²⁷ In a 1960 address, TTC Chairman C.C. Downey even dangled the possibility of TTC support for the elimination of zone fares, in exchange for full assumption of capital costs by Metro.²⁸

The diminution of the operating ratio was exacerbated because, while base fares increased by 100% from 1940 to 1956, that increase came below inflation, which rose by 119% over the same period. TTC workers' hourly wages rose even faster—159%—though the increase was roughly on par with the increase in average workers' wages over that prosperous period. Base fares at 12.5 cents remained well below the majority of American cities' transit systems at the time, which typically charged between 15 and 20 cents.²⁹

The TTC worked rather well within the City of Toronto, and its reputation was quite strong. Though its streetcar routes were crowded, fares were relatively low and their extraordinary frequency made them function relatively well—the TTC frequently boasted that, on its streetcar routes, there was “always a car in sight.” The picture was very different for suburbanites, as suburban politicians would never hesitate to point out. When the fare zone boundary, roughly at the municipal limits of the City of Toronto, was crossed, riders would have to pay nearly double the base fare.³⁰ Riders in the outermost sections of Metro were subject to four additional zones, for each of which they were obliged to pay an additional fare. The system was not a true fare-by-distance scheme, as riders crossing a boundary—even when making a fairly short trip—were forced to pay a

²⁷ “Survey of Toronto Transit Commission,” 57–61.

²⁸ C.C. Downey, “Address to Metro Executive Committee,” 1960, Series 11, File 600, City of Toronto Archives.

²⁹ Inflation figures are based on the wholesale price index for industrial materials, which was the basis used by the TTC. “First Annual Report”; “Survey of Toronto Transit Commission,” 61.

³⁰ In 1960, cash fare for either Zone 1 or Zone 2 was 15 cents, while tickets were 5 for 75 cents. Tickets for trips that cross the Zone 1 and 2 boundary were 4 for \$1.10.

dramatically higher fare than riders, some of whom travelled much longer distances, who remained within the City. The punitive fare structure for suburban riders would be one of the key political issues in Metro's first decades, especially as suburban taxpayers increasingly contributed to subsidization of the TTC.

The problem was that the TTC could not afford to eliminate zone fares without either dramatically increasing fares in zone one, which risked driving away many riders, or by agreeing to an operating subsidy from Metro, which could mean risking the TTC's institutional independence.

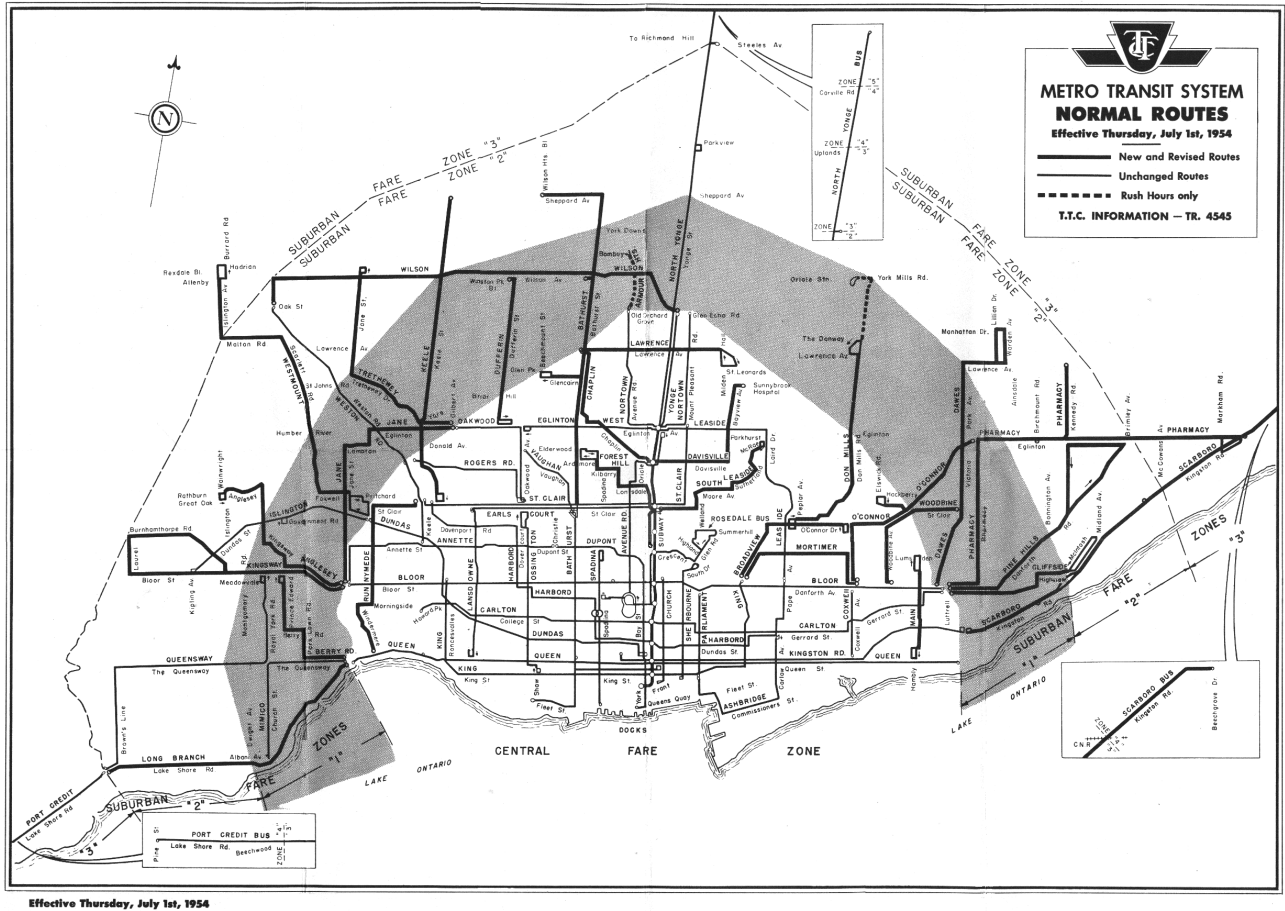


Figure 12: TTC Initial Routes at Creation of Metro, 1954³¹

The creation of Metro had resulted in a large constituency of politicians—suburban members of Metro Council—whose voting base derived limited benefit from one of Metro’s most important operations. That base was also growing in numbers. By 1961, the Metro suburbs had a combined population of 946,380, while the City of Toronto had only 672,407. Metro Council did not reflect this new reality, as legislation defined the membership of the council as 12 representatives from the City of Toronto, plus one from

³¹ “First Annual Report.”

each of the eleven suburban municipalities (the Chair voted to break a tie).³² Metro Council members were not directly elected; the suburban representatives were the mayor or reeve of each municipality, while Toronto's representatives consisted of the mayor and a selection of other local elected officials. Social housing advocate and University of Toronto social work professor Albert Rose argued in his examination of Metropolitan Toronto governance that they were therefore elected mostly on their local records, allowing them to think on a region-wide basis when on Metro Council, rather than acting simply as representatives of their municipalities.³³ Still, the divide in interests between City and suburban members was ever-present. In the early years, when Metro Council was largely under Gardiner's thumb, the arrangement caused few problems. But with Gardiner gone, the strains were beginning to emerge and a redistribution to acknowledge the emergence of a suburban demographic majority was beginning to appear inevitable.

When William Allen was elected chair by Metro Council in 1961, he brought a very different approach to the job. While Gardiner was a charismatic public figure and an imposing presence who dominated Metro Council, Allen was, as Rose described him, "a consummate administrator, far more a city manager than a politician."³⁴ Allen was a somewhat unexpected figure to lead Metro at the time: he came from the City of Toronto, he was a Roman Catholic, and he was a Liberal. He defeated his opponent, North York Reeve Norman Goodhead, by a vote of 14 to 10; though the divide was not entirely on city-

³² While suburbanites as a whole were severely underrepresented, the representational disparities were especially egregious between suburbs. The largest suburb, North York, with 269,959 residents in 1961, had the same single representative on Metro Council as Swansea with a population of 9,628.

³³ Rose, *Governing Metropolitan Toronto*.

³⁴ Rose, 158.

suburban lines, Allen received a large majority of the city votes while Goodhead collected a majority of suburbanites.

North York was the most populous Metro suburb with 270,000 residents in 1961, and its reeve was a firebrand described by Rose as “an articulate, self-made man” who had become the leading spokesman for the 12 suburban municipalities, though he was later felled by a conflict-of-interest scandal.³⁵ Notably, Goodhead had long favoured direct Metro control of the TTC, mostly because of anger over the lack of a single fare, but also in order to be able to force the TTC to improve suburban service. In a 1960 address, which he forwarded to Gardiner, he cited London and Stockholm as examples of cities that planned for the automobile, rail, and public transport “as basic essential services both in the city proper as well as surrounding suburban areas.”³⁶

Gardiner had been able to paper over city-suburban and other disagreements on Metro Council through the force of his own personality, though significant cleavages were exposed by the 1958 debate over the east-west subway route—a debate that the TTC and its largely city-based supporters won only through Gardiner’s personal intervention. Under Allen, the members of Metro Council began to express their own independent views—not least on the subject of transit.

The most fundamental issue wracking the council through the 1950s and 60s was whether Metro should continue to exist at all. The City of Toronto, which had sparked the creation of Metro through its application to annex the suburbs, favoured replacing Metro with a single-tier municipality. Sympathy for this view was shared by many at Metro

³⁵ Rose, 89.

³⁶ “Norman C. Goodhead Radio Address” (Station CFRB, August 21, 1960), Metro Chairman’s Correspondence Fonds, City of Toronto Archives; Harold Crooks, *Giants of Garbage: The Rise of the Global Waste Industry and the Politics of Pollution* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1993), 77–78.

including, long after he left office, Gardiner. Murray Jones spoke derisively of the tendency to “cling to the concept of attaching sovereignty to local units of government which were conceived and developed for a pre-metropolitan society.”³⁷ The suburbs, determined to preserve their independence, were opposed. In this regard, Allen was a consensus figure—despite his City origins, he favoured maintaining the Metro structure.

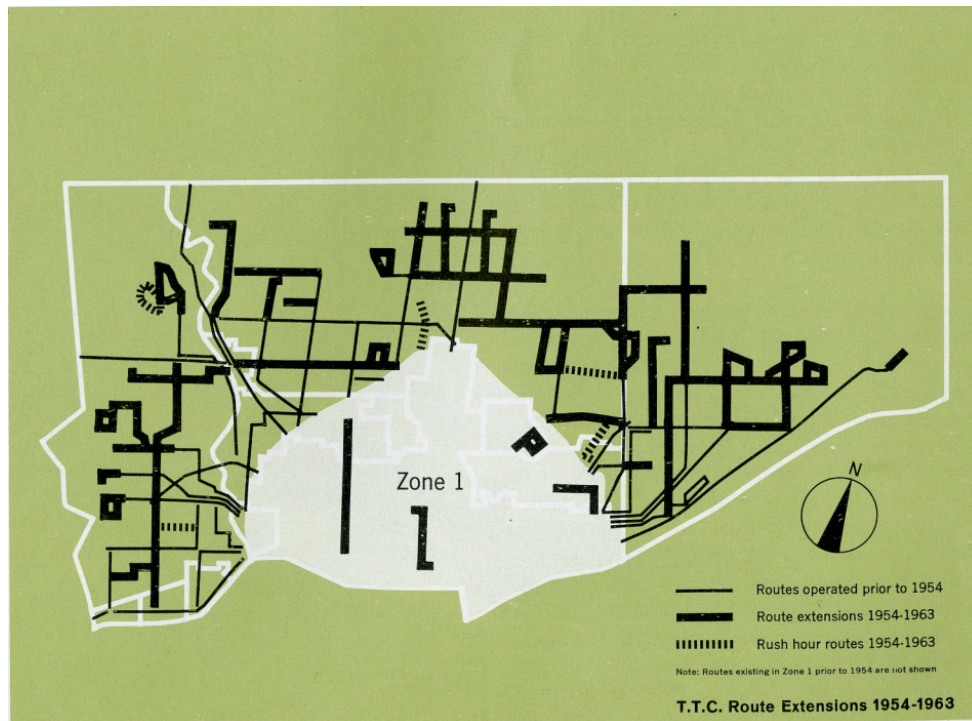


Figure 13: TTC Route Extensions 1954-1963

In response to a renewed application from the City of Toronto to annex the Metro suburbs in 1963, the provincial government appointed a Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto. Carl H. Goldenberg, a prominent Quebec-based labour relations lawyer and expert on municipal governance who had led many royal commissions on

³⁷ Jones, “Some Economic and Social Aspects of Modern Metropolitan (Toronto) Man.”

various issues, was charged with studying Metro and making recommendations on its reform.

Though Goldenberg's final report would take several years to produce, the TTC began to understand the need to develop suburban support for transit, lest they face an uncertain fate when the City of Toronto majority was no longer able to protect them. There had been significant growth in suburban route mileage since the creation of Metro, but the service was minimal. While one-way route mileage increased from 326 to 446 (36.8%) between 1954 and 1962, vehicle miles only increased from 45.3 million to 49.5 million (9.3%).³⁸

Given the salience of zone fares as a political issue, there were reports continually produced over the years that all indicated that the elimination of the zone fares would come at a considerable cost and would either require an unacceptable increase in central area fares or would bring the self-sustainability of the system to an end.³⁹ The Woods Gordon consultants had even met with Mayor W.A. Edwards of Mimico, who urged them to study the possibility of a flat fare, but they demurred.⁴⁰

Suburban councillors were unbowed. Some of the most vocal opposition continued to come from the reeves of the older streetcar suburbs like Mimico and Long Branch, whose constituents chafed under the requirement to pay a double fare when riding the streetcar downtown. They relentlessly demanded a flat fare, and they made their support for the Bloor-Danforth subway a *quid pro quo*. While Gardiner was able to head off the

³⁸ "First Annual Report"; "Ninth Annual Report" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1962).

³⁹ Simpson & Curtin Consultants, Joe R. Ong, and Norman D. Wilson, "A Report on Proposed Rates of Fare for Toronto Transit Commission," May 1955; Hawley S. Simpson and Joe R. Ong, "A Report on Effect of Flat Fares vs. Zone Fares for Toronto Transit Commission," August 1958, City of Toronto Archives.

⁴⁰ "Opposed by Consultants: Suburbs in Favor of Universal Fare Before Metro Aids Rapid Transit," *The Globe and Mail*, May 1, 1957.

debate and push through the subway without full elimination of the zone fare, he shortly after spoke with Lamport, then chairman of the TTC, about the possibility of eliminating zone fares to appease the suburbanites. Lamport again reiterated the TTC's objections that it would be "uneconomic and unfair to the majority" of riders, and implied that pressing for a change to fare arrangements would be a violation on Metro's part of the Metro-TTC agreement on shared financing of the subway.⁴¹ Though the TTC had again won the fare battle, it produced a simmering hostility between the TTC and many members of Metro Council.

The dispute, exemplified by Lamport's flamboyant battles with Gardiner, left the TTC's theretofore pristine reputation tarnished. The brash former Toronto mayor acted as a lightning rod for suburban frustration with the TTC. Their dissatisfaction culminated in a Metro Council initiative for the TTC to be abolished and transformed into a Metro department, directly accountable to Metro Council—the TTC's nightmare scenario. While the campaign was ultimately defeated, with Metro taking a modestly more active role and Lamport removed as chairman, the TTC was chastened and understood that it needed to improve its political relationships. As Commissioner C.C. Downey described in a 1960 presentation to the Metro Executive Committee, the TTC's morale—so strong at the time of the Woods-Gordon report in 1957—had been badly shaken by the years of discord.⁴²

The TTC itself remained starkly divided on the best approach to transit. Political scientist Harold Kaplan described various factions shaping the TTC's policies. Interest

⁴¹ Allan A. Lamport to Frederick G. Gardiner, Personal, June 23, 1958, Metro Chairman's Correspondence Fonds, City of Toronto Archive; Allan A. Lamport to Frederick G. Gardiner, Personal, June 24, 1958, Metro Chairman's Correspondence Fonds, City of Toronto Archive.

⁴² "Application for Legislation Respecting Toronto Transit Commission," Executive Committee (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, October 18, 1960); Downey, "Address to Metro Executive Committee."

groups, many City officials, and the politically inclined faction of the board (collectively dubbed “politicos” by Kaplan) supported a dramatic expansion of suburban bus service. The staff of the TTC, as well as the more technically oriented members of the board, were opposed, believing that it would harm the Commission’s long-cherished efficiency and therefore imperil its independence. The latter, dubbed “administrators” by Kaplan, typically made up three of the five members of the TTC board and were more apolitical, tended to defer to staff, and were drawn largely from the business community or the civil service. Even as the staff began to draw closer to the Metro planners after the former’s victory in the subway route battle, cooperation was limited by the fear of many “politicos” and interest groups that the Planning Board tilted too far in favour of suburban subway expansion and of expressways. The factional divides within the TTC and its broader constituency persisted and shaped transit policy to a considerable degree, and would eventually allow Metro Council to exert more control over the system and to tilt decision-making toward greater suburban service expansion.⁴³

All in all, the first decade of Metro was relatively favourable for the TTC. Transportation investment by governments, unlike in most American cities, was genuinely balanced between roads and transit, though transit was still expected to pay its own operating costs while highways were not. In Metro’s first decade, the TTC spent approximately \$120 million on the public transit system, of which \$92 million was spent on rapid transit facilities and about \$30 million on new buses, streetcars, and other equipment; 60% of the funds came from fares, while the remaining 40% of capital expenditures were covered by a subsidy from Metro. Over the same period from 1953-63,

⁴³ Kaplan, *Urban Political Systems*, 142–43.

Metro spent about \$160 million on roadways, of which about 50% was covered by provincial subsidy; the province spent an additional \$54 million on the provincial highway system within Metro.⁴⁴ In 1962, Metro's planning commissioner Murray Jones spoke of the aspiration to spend about an equal amount on roads and rapid transit over the following two decades.⁴⁵ Still, despite the large capital investments in new subways, ridership continued to decline. The TTC was far from out of the woods, and the tensions between suburban and urban riders would soon come to a head.

⁴⁴ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "10 Years of Progress: Metropolitan Toronto 1953-1963," 22.

⁴⁵ Murray Jones, "Some Results of Planning in Metropolitan Toronto" (Brookings Institution, Washington, 1962).

Chapter 5: The 1963 Service Expansion

The TTC's ridership reached a post-Depression nadir in 1961. For the first time, its financial sustainability was an open question. Suburban councillors on Metro Council were increasingly irate about the perceived inadequacy of service to their constituencies, and about the punitive extra fare levied on riders crossing between the old City of Toronto and the new suburbs.¹ In 1958, they had reluctantly acceded to construction of a new east-west subway on Bloor Street and Danforth Avenue to complement the north-south Yonge subway built in 1954, but in return they expected meaningful concessions from the TTC. Their demands for a fully equal fare system were, for the moment, off the table owing to cost and the TTC's opposition, but the TTC finally bent, agreeing to a proposal by Commissioner Charles Walton to eliminate the lightly populated outer two of four fare zones and charge them at the Zone 2 rate, beginning in 1962.²

The fare zone rationalization placated suburban councillors, at least temporarily. Scarborough Reeve Albert Campbell called it "A very big thing to residents of this township," while Etobicoke reeve H.O. Waffle viewed it as "A big step in the right direction." Campbell was unsurprisingly pleased that residents of outer Scarborough would receive a whopping fare cut from 45 to 27.5 cents per ride downtown. The modest population of the outer two zones meant that the cost to the TTC was for the moment limited—projected to be about \$155,000 per year. Nevertheless, all suburbanites agreed that the change should merely be a precursor to a one-zone fare system. Marie Curtis

¹ W.F. Irvin, "Report on the Effect of Amalgamation on the T.T.C. One-Fare System," January 30, 1953, Series 2221, File 47, City of Toronto Archives; "Opposed by Consultants"; Hawley S. Simpson and Joe R. Ong, "A Report on Effect of Flat Fares vs. Zone Fares for Toronto Transit Commission."

² "Scepticism Toward Single Fare," *Toronto Daily Star*, February 13, 1961, sec. Editorial.

continued her fierce fight for a one-zone fare system: "It seems peculiar to me that people out here who are still paying the two-mill subsidy for subway construction still have to pay two fares. I'm not going to rest until something's done about it." Other suburban representatives held similar views, while City of Toronto representatives opposed the idea of suburban fare reductions altogether.

Effectively, there were three different perspectives on transit policy in Metro. The City was opposed to subsidy for suburban service improvements or for eliminating zone fares, but were in favour of subsidy to prevent fare increases on City riders in Zone 1. Suburbanites wanted subsidy for improved suburban service and for eliminating zone fares, and wouldn't accept subsidy for keeping existing fares low or for capital expansion without it. The TTC itself was opposed to operating subsidy, but actively sought additional capital subsidy.

In the short term, the City view generally prevailed, with the support of the TTC itself. When deficits threatened to force unreasonable fare increases on Zone 1 riders, capital or temporary operating subsidy from Metro Council was generally forthcoming to head it off. But the City representatives had little prospect of imposing their will over the long term. While they were able to prevent a flat fare for the moment, the growing suburban demands for fare reform and service improvements, combined with the City of Toronto's need for suburban support for its desired subway expansions, made fare rationalization a political idea whose time had come.³

³ "Okay 2-Zone Plan, Insist One-Fare 'Has To Come,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, December 20, 1961; "TTC Fare Cut for Suburbs," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 20, 1961; "TTC Profit Means Nothing," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 20, 1961, sec. Editorial.

Ford Brand, an oft-dissenting TTC commissioner and former City of Toronto controller, said that the cost of eliminating zone fares should not be borne by the TTC alone. With the support of the *Star's* editorial board, he wanted to use the elimination of the outermost fare zones as leverage to force Metro Council to agree to subsidy of the TTC. He was opposed by the other commissioners and by the TTC's administrators, the latter who remained uninterested in Metro operating subsidy as they jealously guarded the TTC's independence from Metro Council.⁴ For them, Brand's proposal was a mortal threat, since they believed subsidy from Metro would mean that Metro would, in return, insist on making key planning and operational decisions on a political basis. The TTC had embraced for decades its position as an independent public authority, and its staff had no desire to embrace change.

On February 2, 1962, the TTC met with Metro Council's Executive Committee to discuss its situation. TTC Chairman Downey provided a sunny portrayal of the TTC's current financial state, while warning that deficits would soon balloon without heavy fare increases. Press coverage of the meeting was hijacked by Brand, who produced a dissenting brief painting an even darker picture of the TTC's financial position. He argued that its self-sustaining state was already a mirage, produced by service cuts and fare increases that were driving passengers away. Some members of the Executive Committee had already drawn the conclusion that the legislation calling for self-sustaining operation was obsolete. "The present legislation is outmoded," said Norman Goodhead. He asked for a report on what service would be needed to adequately serve the entire metropolitan area, and "the degree of inability of the Commission to carry out such plans under the

⁴ "TTC Profit Means Nothing."

existing legislation which requires the operations of the Commission to be self-sustaining”—implying a turn away from self-sustaining operation. The TTC management was reluctant as always to agree to an operating subsidy, fearing a loss of independence and instead preferring to ask for additional capital subsidy and exemption from taxation. Allen firmly overruled the TTC’s objections as he closed the meeting, directing the TTC to produce the report as Goodhead had requested. “Tell us where you’re short, and give us an estimate of the dollar cost, then the problem is ours,” he said.⁵

Following the meeting, the TTC wrote a letter dated February 12, 1962 to all thirteen Metro municipalities asking for them to outline requests, ordered by preference, for additional services within their boundaries. These requests could involve increased frequency on existing routes, extensions to existing routes, and new routes.⁶

Each municipality’s emphasis was different. Overall, there were seventy-nine requests for service improvement. North York, the most populous suburban borough, made the most extensive requests, including five requests for more frequent service, eight for route extension, and eleven for new routes. Scarborough—the most geographically expansive borough—had the second most requests. Only York and North York requested increased frequency on established services. Other municipalities focused on improved coverage through new routes and the extension of existing routes. The City of Toronto’s requests were fairly modest. Other requests were more fanciful, including calls for a monorail along Highway 401. In all but one case, the municipalities failed to order the

⁵ “Executive Committee Minutes (Special Meeting: Capital Works Programme - Financial Position of Toronto Transit Commission)” (Executive Committee, Metropolitan Toronto Council, February 2, 1962); “Brand Raps TTC Fare-Raise Plan,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 3, 1962, Night edition.

⁶ “Metropolitan Area Transit Study” (Toronto Transit Commission, June 7, 1962), Series 1143, Item 478, City of Toronto Archives.

requests by priority as requested—suggesting the political difficulty of prioritizing one neighbourhood over another.⁷

In June 1962, the TTC presented Goodhead’s requested report to Metro’s executive committee, incorporating the results of the surveys. The cover letter outlined the Commission’s future plans for transit and its inability to carry out the plans on a self-sustaining basis as required by the legislation establishing the commission. Uncharacteristically, they avoided specifying their preference for capital subsidy over operating subsidy, omitting discussion of the source of funding for the proposed improvements. The report touched on subway expansion and plans for the progressive abandonment of streetcars before coming to the issue of suburban bus service. “The extension of an adequate bus system in the expanding suburban areas is a pressing and continuing problem,” they wrote. “The Commission appreciates the desirability to provide public transit to a new or growing community as quickly as other [municipal services] are provided.” The problem was that such routes required subsidy. “Bus routes into new territory are, almost without exception, operated at a loss for some time,” the commissioners cautioned. “Accordingly, the Commission is limited in the number of such routes or extensions which it can establish under the requirements of existing legislation which requires its operations to be self-sustaining.”⁸

Of the seventy-nine municipal requests, the TTC recommended that forty be implemented. Of those, eight routes were recommended for immediate implementation,

⁷ “Metropolitan Area Transit Study.”

⁸ C.C. Downey, Q.C. et al. to Wm. R. Allen, Esq. Q.C., Chairman and Members of the Executive Committee, The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, June 7, 1962, Series 1143, Item 478, City of Toronto Archives.

and the remaining thirty-two were suggested for implementation if the TTC received additional financial resources.⁹

In August 1962, in response to the report, Metro Council voted 13–10 after eight hours of debate, to request provincial permission to subsidize transit in order to limit fare increases and improve service to the suburbs. Impelled by the precipitous decline in ridership—fifteen million riders lost in 1961 alone—the councillors embraced the concept of subsidy in order to fund the expansion of suburban transit service, as well as to minimize a planned fare hike. Metro Council discussed funding all forty recommended service improvements—and added two more—at a projected cost of \$1.4 million in 1963. That amounted to about 3.6% of total 1962 TTC expenditures. As usual, the TTC management preferred to limit the subsidy by imposing a fare hike. “I don’t think there’s as much opposition to a fare increase as some people think,” TTC chairman Downey remarked. “We might lose a few riders by putting the price up, but we’d gain them back through extending our suburban services.” Metro Chairman Allen, a long-time opponent of fare hikes, relented and accepted a small increase. The 1963 deficit, including the service improvements, was proposed to be covered by a combination of a \$1.5 million subsidy and a modest fare increase from seven to six tickets for a dollar.¹⁰ It was a momentous decision: Metro Council had committed itself to an end to self-sustaining operation for the TTC, and to the provision of subsidy for service improvements.

Metro subsidy for transit service expansion could count on the support of the powerful and liberal *Star* newspaper, which completely accepted the idea that improved

⁹ “Metropolitan Area Transit Study.”

¹⁰ “Minutes” (Metropolitan Toronto Council, August 21, 1962); “Metro Okays Bid to Subsidize TTC,” *Toronto Daily Star*, August 22, 1962; Robertson Cochrane, “Taxpayers’ Subsidy to TTC Will Boost Service in Suburbs,” *Toronto Daily Star*, August 25, 1962, sec. Background; “Ninth Annual Report.”

service would drive ridership. “Since Metro was formed 10 years ago, the population has grown 38 per cent,” cited one editorial. “But the TTC is carrying 16 per cent fewer passengers. Why? Largely because it tended to surrender the suburbs--where the main population growth was taking place--to the private automobile. It didn't offer a reasonable transit alternative. It looked upon the new suburban lines with distaste as sure money-losers.”¹¹ The *Star* instead favoured introducing transit as soon as suburban development occurred, in stark contrast with most North American cities. “There are parts of Metro which are being inadequately served by the TTC, or which are receiving no service at all,” it wrote in a 1961 editorial. “These are mainly new suburban areas, which the TTC refuses to enter until it is assured for heavy passenger loads. While it waits, residents get used to driving their cars, and when the TTC finally provides a service, they are reluctant to change their mode of travel.” The only solution, they argued, was subsidy: “Every resident of Metro--not just transit riders--benefits from an efficient transit system. Metro should therefore subsidize any losses” following changes to fare policy.¹²

Opponents of operating subsidy, however, could consistently count on the support of the TTC's own administration, which was more than willing to sacrifice a financial infusion that would come at the potential cost of its administrative independence. The *Star* followed the TTC's lead, favouring Metro's assumption of debt payments for capital costs and exemption of the commission from taxes, rather than direct operating funding.¹³ The TTC's resistance to adding new subsidized suburban services provoked an organized campaign—led by Reeve Goodhead—to abolish the TTC's independence entirely and to

¹¹ “TTC Woos the Suburbs,” *Toronto Daily Star*, October 1, 1963, sec. Editorial.

¹² “TTC Profit Means Nothing.”

¹³ “An Unfair Load,” *Toronto Daily Star*, March 14, 1963, sec. Editorial.

transform it into a department of Metro. Partly in response to the campaign, the TTC finally shifted its position in favour of improved suburban service—even if it meant accepting subsidy and the loss of independence that might come with it.

The TTC began operating its twelve highest-priority route expansions in September, amounting to about a half-million additional vehicle-miles of service. Spurred also by the reduction in the zone fare penalty, the TTC in 1962 showed its first annual ridership increase since the subway was opened in 1954. It was a small uptick—from 268 to 271 million riders—but it heralded a changed trajectory.¹⁴ From seven years of inexorable decline, mirroring the pattern across the continent, the TTC was to begin a nearly unbroken quarter-century of ridership increases—in stark contrast with its North American peers (see Chapter 7).

With the prospect of Metro subsidy in exchange for increased service, the TTC further refined the planned suburban service expansion. The metro municipalities updated their requests for additional service, particularly to serve new development areas, in their 1963 annual presentations to the TTC. In June, Scarborough acknowledged that the TTC had made “considerable strides” in serving the borough, but had numerous additional requests for service.¹⁵ The TTC also used more systematic means, including a 1963 origin and destination survey of 4,400 homes and 100 industries in the western part of Metro. It unsurprisingly revealed that the TTC in the western suburban municipalities carried a much higher percentage of long-haul trips (16.8%)—mainly to downtown—than

¹⁴ “Ninth Annual Report.”

¹⁵ “Council Presentation to the Toronto Transit Commission, 1963” (Township of Scarborough, June 7, 1963), Toronto Transit Commission Fonds, City of Toronto Archives.

local suburban trips (8.8%). Even among rush hour work trips, the latter accounted for a third of trips in the suburban area, and that proportion was continuing to grow.¹⁶

The opening of the subsidy floodgates also enabled the temporary reversal of the fare increase. After only nineteen days of higher fares, Metro Council narrowly agreed to a \$2.5 million subsidy in exchange for reversion to the previous fare structure. In this instance, the City representatives, along with the reeves of the relatively urban Village of Swansea and Township of East York, formed a solid bloc in favour of subsidy. The suburbanites were fiercely opposed, angered by inaction on suburban service expansion and on the elimination of zone fares. Goodhead exemplified the reaction when he ridiculed a TTC statement that the new Sheppard Avenue bus route would be extended “as the area develops,” countering that “[t]his is an area that has been developed for the past 20 years.” The TTC “haven’t a cotton-picking clue as to what is happening in the suburbs,” he thundered. The suburban reeves decided to launch a legal challenge against the subsidy. As a last-ditch manoeuvre when approval was imminent, the suburbanites had moved to add an additional \$1 million in subsidy to be used exclusively for the expansion of suburban bus service. While the motion was defeated, the political need for improved transit service to the suburbs was apparent.¹⁷

The TTC was finally ready to respond. The 1963 expansion was to be considerably more ambitious than what the TTC had undertaken a year earlier, amounting to over a million vehicle-miles of additional service. More importantly, it marked the development

¹⁶ “Ninth Annual Report”; J.G. Inglis, General Manager of Operations, “West Suburban Service Recommendations in Association with the Origin Destination Survey” (Toronto Transit Commission, July 18, 1963), Toronto Transit Commission Fonds, City of Toronto Archives.

¹⁷ “Metro Subsidy for TTC To Cancel Fare Increase,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 4, 1963; “Metro Prepares Bills For Transit Subsidy As Councils Grumble,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 7, 1963; “Goodhead to Fight TTC Fare Subsidy,” *Toronto Daily Star*, May 8, 1963.

of a grid of frequent bus routes that would be able to serve cross-suburban trips while also improving access to the central business district. They would use the former concession roads, spaced about a mile apart and forming a grid of arterial routes throughout the suburbs, to bring transit access to the entire developed area of Metro.¹⁸ The rollout of new routes on September 1 went smoothly, and the reaction was nearly everything that the TTC could have hoped for.¹⁹



Figure 14: 1963 Service Expansion²⁰

Reeve John MacBeth, whose borough of Etobicoke was the largest recipient of new services, described it as “a new day for public transportation in the suburbs. And it’s a new day in our relationships with the TTC.” Reeve Albert Campbell of Scarborough, who

¹⁸ “Report on Transit Service Expansion” (Toronto Transit Commission, August 12, 1963).

¹⁹ “No Snags In New TTC Routes,” *Toronto Daily Star*, September 3, 1963.

²⁰ “Tenth Annual Report.”

was to become Metro Chairman in 1969, was equally positive: “This represents the start of the grid system in the suburbs. I am very pleased.” Goodhead remained unappeased, dismissing the improvements, which were disproportionately modest in North York, as “a drop in the bucket,” but it was clear that genuine suburban transit expansion was a political winner among suburbanites.²¹

The programme was an evident success, and the *Star*’s editorial page exulted over the results of the expansion. Astoundingly, the additional service, instead of being a financial drain on the Commission, proved to have brought in more money in fares than it cost to operate. “The folly of [the TTC’s reticence to expand suburban services] is indicated by the early results from the recent expansion [...]. It has found the key to prosperity. Let it use the key freely.”²²

In a review sixth months after the improvement, the TTC described the results as “very encouraging.” Overall TTC ridership continued to rise over the period—by 2.5%—but the increase was entirely attributable to new suburban riders. Ridership in suburban Zone 2 rose by a dramatic 9.3% in the sixth months following the service improvement; in the urban Zone 1, ridership increased by only 1.1%, more than the total of which was a result of new suburban riders travelling into Zone 1. Travel entirely within the urban core actually declined. When unlinked trips²³ are considered, the rise in suburban ridership

²¹ “Etobicoke Cheers TTC Changes, North York’s Goodhead Critical,” *Toronto Daily Star*, August 20, 1963, sec. Metro News.

²² “TTC Woos the Suburbs.”

²³ “Unlinked” means that each segment of a journey involving transfers is counted as a separate trip.

was even greater—14%—as suburban riders were taking advantage of the new grid network to make cross-suburban trips using multiple bus routes.²⁴

Jarrett Walker speaks of the inevitable choice between allocating service to "ridership" or "coverage" routes. The former are located in more densely populated parts of the region, while the latter are in low-density suburban areas. He suggests that allocating as much service as possible to high-density areas will inevitably lead to the maximization of ridership. While this may be accurate when examining American transit systems with very limited service at the outset, the 1963 service expansion suggests that as long as good service is already available in the dense central area, adding service in lower-density areas may in fact serve to maximize ridership.²⁵

The review attempted to tease out the causes of the ridership increase. While employment levels are usually the key driver of ridership change, the report noted that if the change had been due to the increase in employment, central area riding would also have seen an increase. Furthermore, there was no meaningful ridership increase in the months before the September improvements—even after the University Avenue subway extension that opened in February—though employment grew at a similar rate before and after September. Most notably, suburban ridership growth continued even after fares increased on New Year's Day 1964.

²⁴ "1963 Suburban Expansion Programme: A Report on Six Months of Operation" (Toronto Transit Commission, June 4, 1964), Toronto Transit Commission Fonds, City of Toronto Archive.

²⁵ Walker, *Human Transit*, 117–34.

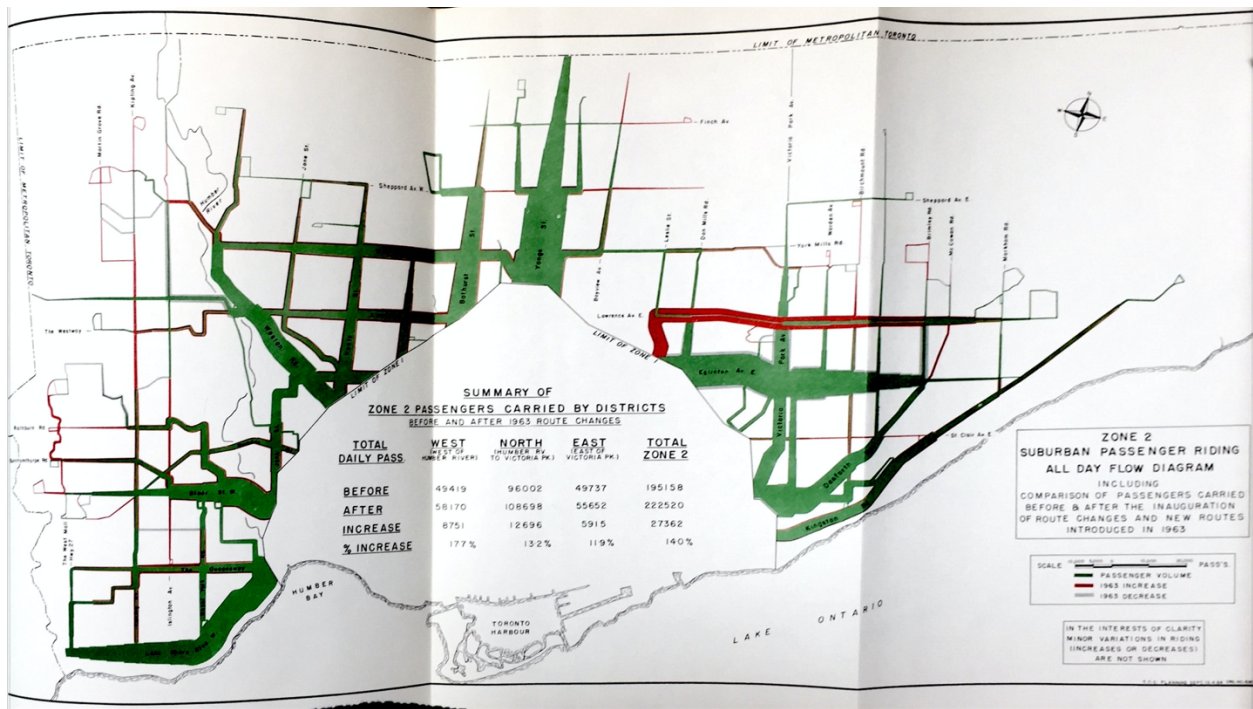


Figure 15: 1963 Suburban Service Improvements (in Red) Weighted by Ridership²⁶

Scarborough council wrote “to acknowledge the considerable strides taken by the Commission in 1963, having reference to new and extended services in the township.” They called the new Lawrence Avenue service “an unqualified success” and praised the “very necessary and useful function” of the new north-south grid routes. They noted that the service changes “undoubtedly” contributed to the 1963 ridership increases.²⁷

The TTC advertised its success in local newspapers. “Every year, TTC wheels have rolled into new districts in a transit expansion program unmatched anywhere on this continent,” the commission boasted. “The cumulative result: an increase of more than a

²⁶ “1963 Suburban Expansion Programme.”

²⁷ “Council of the Township of Scarborough Presentation for 1964 to the Chairman and Members, Toronto Transit Commission,” April 1, 1964, TTC Minutes, City of Toronto Archives.

million riders in 1962, two and a quarter million more in 1963, two million more riders” from January to June of 1964. It pinpointed the suburban expansion as driver of many of the gains, claiming riders had “discovered that [1963's] million-mile grid system extensions provide better service to the shopping centres, the recreation facilities and the work locations in their own communities. They’ve discovered, too, that new and extended direct-to-subway bus lines run deeper into outlying areas than ever before. This means faster, more convenient service to downtown.”²⁸

**Here's why thousands more people
are travelling TTC everyday!**

Every year, TTC wheels have rolled into new districts in a transit expansion program unmatched anywhere on this continent. The heavy lines on the map show the extent of this Metro-wide expansion.

The cumulative result: an increase of more than a million riders in 1962, two and a quarter million more in 1963, two million more riders so far this year.

These riders have found that transit is a good way to go—a good way to save on their daily travel expenses.

They've discovered that last year's million-mile grid system extensions provide better service to the shopping centres, the recreation facilities and the work locations in their own communities.

They've discovered, too, that new and extended direct-to-subway bus lines run deeper into outlying areas than ever before. This means faster, more convenient service to downtown.

Since the opening of the University subway extension last year, thousands more daily passengers have discovered the advantages of fast, weather-free subway travel—an indicator of the benefits to come when the Bloor-Danforth subway is completed and the University line is operating at full potential.

Think it over. The thousands and thousands of Metro citizens who have switched to transit have found that TTC service is convenient and that it saves them money. Think about it, join them and find that: **TRANSIT IS YOUR BEST TRAVEL BARGAIN**

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION 

Figure 16: TTC Advertisement²⁹

²⁸ “TTC Advertisement,” *Toronto Daily Star*, June 16, 1964.

²⁹ *Toronto Daily Star*, June 16, 1964.

By mollifying the suburbanites with service expansion, the TTC was able to secure its wish of capital, rather than operating subsidy. On December 6th, with the support of all City representatives and five of eleven suburban members, Metro Council voted to assume \$51.8 million in TTC debt owing for the construction of the Yonge and Bloor-Danforth subways, and to shift the Metro contribution to subway construction from 55 to 70 per cent.³⁰ The changes were approved by the OMB in January of 1964.³¹ The long-cherished notion that the Yonge subway was entirely funded from the farebox is mythical. It was largely funded by borrowing, much of which was ultimately paid by Metro taxpayers. The assumed debenture interest amounted to \$1.45 million in 1964.³² The timing of the shift in suburban votes was critical, as the City representatives were to lose their Metro Council majority when Metro was restructured in 1967.³³

The Progressive Conservative provincial government, which had a strong suburban support base, also entered the field. Beginning in 1964, it agreed to fund one third of the roadbed of the Bloor-Danforth subway line, which was then under construction, through its highway funding program.³⁴ The roadbed, meaning the tunnels and rights-of-way as opposed to the stations, tracks, and vehicles, was deemed to be equivalent to a highway, which also received one-third funding. The province also agreed

³⁰ “Metro Council Votes to Take Over \$51 Million TTC Debt: Move Will Add \$4.60 To Average Annual Tax,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 6, 1963.

³¹ “Approval by Ontario Municipal Board of Financial Assistance by Metropolitan Corporation to Toronto Transit Commission,” Appendix A, Volume I, Metropolitan Toronto Council Minutes (Executive Committee, 1964).

³² “Eleventh Annual Report” (Toronto Transit Commission, 1964).

³³ The original Metro Council arrangement severely underrepresented suburbanites, especially those from the most populous suburbs, which still only had a single representative. North York, with 270,000 residents in 1961, had one representative; the City of Toronto, with 670,000 residents, had 12 representatives. In 1967, Metro Council seats were reassigned to be in proportion to population.

³⁴ “Financing of Public Transit in Toronto,” Submission to Goldenberg Commission (Toronto Transit Commission, 1974), 4, Fonds 220, Series 11, File 953, City of Toronto Archives.

to purchase Metro's debentures, so that the municipality could borrow at a much lower rate. The provincial amounts were small, at least initially. The roadbed funding first flowed in 1964, and amounted to \$6 million.³⁵ In 1962 and 1963, the province purchased \$10 million in debentures. The amount grew to \$20 million in 1964.³⁶ The stage had been set for a dramatic escalation in municipal and provincial government support for transit.

In 1964, the TTC operated 2.3 million additional vehicle-miles of service in comparison with 1963, a 4.3% increase. The ridership declines of the late 1950s and early 1960s were over. While ridership rose by 1.2 million (0.45%) in 1962, the increase was 2.3 million (0.86%) in 1963, and 4.2 million (1.5%) in 1964. That was the first full year with the new suburban grid network, and the increase came despite implementation of the delayed fare increase on January 1. Following another major suburban service expansion of over a million vehicle-miles in 1965, ridership growth exploded once again. 12.8 million additional riders took the TTC in that year, a 4.63% increase.

These remarkable results were in stark contrast to the 1963 projections of Simpson & Curtin Consultants and Joe Ong, prominent American transit consultants who expected the system to continue a slow ridership decline until the Bloor-Danforth subway and its suburban extensions opened in 1966 and 1968, respectively. In those years, they projected that ridership would briefly spike before resuming an inexorable decline. Their forecast ridership for 1967 (294.9 million) was 19.5 million below the figure the TTC achieved, and

³⁵ G.O. Grant, "Memorandum for Mr. G.A. Lascelles, Commissioner of Finance" (Commissioner of Roads, Metropolitan Toronto, September 23, 1963), Series 11, File 608, City of Toronto Archives; G.A. Lascelles to William R. Allen, Q.C., "Re: Provincial Subsidy - Bloor-Danforth Subway," October 29, 1964, Series 11, File 608, City of Toronto Archives; William R. Allen, "Letter to Hon. Charles S. MacNaughton, Minister of Highways," November 3, 1964.

³⁶ James N. Allan and J.W. Spooner, "Ontario Government Press Release," December 1, 1964, Series 11, File 608, City of Toronto Archives.

their model had assumed a lower fare. Simpson and Ong had projected that transit ridership would increase by 8.25% from 1962 to 1972. In reality, after assiduously improving local suburban transit service, the TTC increased its ridership in that period by 28.7%. After the TTC—with provincial assistance—eliminated the zone fare in 1973 and further expanded suburban service (see Chapter 8), ridership spiked by another 12.3%.³⁷ The sharp divergence between consultants' projections and the ridership that was actually achieved following service improvements did not go unnoticed. In private correspondence, TTC Commissioner C.C. Downey noted to Metro Chairman Allen that since Simpson and Ong's ridership projections were so far off, their \$4 million projection of the annual cost of eliminating zone fares could be similarly pessimistic.³⁸

Optimism about suburban transit was further enhanced by the unexpectedly strong financial performance of the new services. Though the TTC had said in its 1962 Annual Report that “the fact must be faced that bus routes into new suburban districts are heavy money losers, sometimes for many years,” they proved to have been far too fatalistic about the prospects of suburban transit.³⁹ Supplemented by Metro's assumption of some of the TTC's debt service charges, the new services were so financially successful that in 1964—the first year that the new services were in place—the TTC made a profit of \$3.9 million. While operating expenses rose by \$1.15 million, revenues rose by \$6.4 million due to increased suburban ridership and the higher fare. From January to May,

³⁷ Simpson & Curtin Consultants and Joe R. Ong, “Economic Study of Bloor-Danforth Subway and Proposed Extensions”; “1972 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto” (Toronto Transit Commission, 1972); “1973 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1973).

³⁸ C.C. Downey to William R. Allen, Personal, September 21, 1965, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archives.

³⁹ “Ninth Annual Report.”

revenues were 3% higher than the budget had projected.⁴⁰ Profit rose to \$4.1 million in 1965, as the \$1.975 million cost of additional service was more than offset by the \$2.135 million increase in revenue from higher ridership.⁴¹ The amounts massively exceeded the TTC's 1963 projections of a \$63,000 combined surplus from 1963 to 1968.⁴² While it did not prove possible to maintain profitability indefinitely amid the rampant inflation of the 1970s, the provision of service to new suburbs was not the clear financial drain that was predicted, as long as the service was attractive enough to entice suburban riders who could afford cars. The ridership turnaround and the beginning of steady growth after 1963 put the TTC on a much more stable footing. There was no longer a question of whether it would fade away into insignificance like so many of its American counterparts. More critically, the service expansion had come as many of the new suburban neighbourhoods were being built, allowing them to establish transit-oriented travel patterns from the outset, and while the TTC still retained substantial Metro-wide support.

The ridership and financial success of the expansion thoroughly belies the assertion of some Toronto writers, like Lawrence Solomon, a vehement critic of urban sprawl who perhaps let his distaste for suburbs blind him to the success of the TTC's suburban transit. Indeed, he denounces the agency as having been an "agent of sprawl" after Metro forced it to expand service to the suburbs.⁴³ He lamented the failure of the TTC to attract more riders in the first decade of the TTC, when it expanded its route-

⁴⁰ R.R. Gillespie, "T.T.C. Passenger Revenue - Metropolitan Zone Fare System, May 1964" (Toronto Transit Commission, June 17, 1964), City of Toronto Archives.

⁴¹ "Ninth Annual Report"; "Tenth Annual Report"; "Eleventh Annual Report"; "Twelfth Annual Report" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1965).

⁴² "Assumption of TTC Debt Will Be Studied by Metro," *The Globe and Mail*, August 14, 1963.

⁴³ Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls*, 13.

mileage significantly but provided only limited service on its suburban routes. He entirely neglects to examine the following decade, when the TTC dramatically expanded service on its suburban routes and experienced tremendous ridership gains. While he describes the suburban services as “uneconomic,” he ignores that the financial performance of the TTC *improved* after the 1963 expansion.⁴⁴ Regardless, as will be explored in Chapter 7, American agencies that attempted to cling to the idea of operating transit as a profitable business through the postwar decades ended up in the spiral of fare hikes, ridership declines, and service cuts. Eschewing subsidy and refusing to serve the growing parts of the metropolitan area would not have been a better path for the TTC.

The Bloor-Danforth subway opened its fare gates on February 25, 1966, accompanied by another enormous expansion of the connecting bus network. Instead of waiting for the aging and wildly overcrowded streetcars, riders travelling east and west across the city could now descend the stairs into immaculate white-tiled stations and climb aboard speedy new silver trains. The architecture drew no raves; a critic compared the stations unfavourably to Montreal’s new Metro stations, complaining that “little thought seems to have been given to the emotional context of travelling.” While they were “superbly functional” and “pathologically clean,” they were “as colourful as the gent’s toilets that adorned Victorian England at the time of the Prince Consort.” The surface entrance pavilions, which doubled as sheltered terminals for connecting bus routes so that passengers could pass seamlessly into the subway below without stopping at fare gates, were “a prelude to the tiled sterility below.”⁴⁵ Despite the aesthetic shortcomings,

⁴⁴ Solomon, 14–15.

⁴⁵ Robert Gretton, “Metro: Laurier,” *The Canadian Architect* 12, no. 2 (February 1, 1967): 27–29.

the functionality of the service, embedded within a frequent network of surface transit, attracted legions of new riders—19,110,441 (6.6%) more in 1966 than in the previous year. Of the new riders, over 7 million were in the suburbs—a 12% increase in suburban ridership—even though the subway didn’t directly serve the suburban municipalities. The 2.2 million vehicle-miles of additional suburban service (another 16% increase) made it easy for suburbanites to get from their homes to the subway, which then provided them with a quick ride downtown or across town, the latter possibility being one of the key reasons for preferring the Bloor-Danforth route over the “U” route that was exclusively oriented toward downtown commuting.⁴⁶

These results were in keeping with the service elasticities estimated by Boisjoly et al, and even better than those estimated by Currie et al. The TTC obtained a 7.5% suburban ridership increase for a 10% increase in vehicle-miles of suburban service, compared with 8.27% estimated by Boisjoly et al and 3.5% estimated by Currie and Wallis.⁴⁷

The ridership turnaround and the beginning of steady growth after 1963 put the TTC on a much more stable footing. It was no longer a question of whether it would fade away into insignificance like so many of its American counterparts. The commission’s new chair, Ralph Day, a businessman with ample respect for the TTC’s staff, helped the organization heal from fierce internecine battles of the late 1950s when the TTC’s fiercely defended independence was threatened by its proposed transformation into a normal Metro department.

⁴⁶ “Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto 1966” (Toronto Transit Commission, July 13, 1967).

⁴⁷ Currie and Wallis, “Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence”; Boisjoly et al., “Invest in the Ride.”

Under Day, the defence of its independence was maintained, with the commission going so far as to ban the Metro Council liaison from all its discussions not directly related to subway construction, where Metro's outsize financial contribution made his exclusion untenable. Members of the public were excluded entirely.⁴⁸ As Eli Comay, who replaced Jones as Metro planning commissioner in 1962, explained in a 1966 address, Metro Council played an increasing role in subway planning, but "while the commission is subjected to sporadic pressures from local Councils and other groups for specific service improvements, it has retained complete authority over basic service decisions."⁴⁹

Paul Mees claimed that Toronto's transit exemplifies comprehensive planning, because the TTC ran all local transit in contrast with transit systems in other major cities that were fragmented between several private operators.⁵⁰ However, the TTC's expansion of service to the suburbs was not a result of comprehensive long-term planning. Comprehensive planning efforts of the period, as we will see, paid little attention to bus service; transit planning was all about large-scale capital projects. Instead, the creation of the suburban bus grid was perhaps best defined as an example of Charles Lindblom's theory of "muddling through."⁵¹ The "scientific" rational-comprehensive model was then very much in vogue. As seminally described by Edward Banfield, it called for definition of objectives, followed by development of alternatives to achieve the stated objectives, and finally evaluation of the various alternatives to determine the optimal solution.⁵² This model formed the basis of many comprehensive transportation planning studies, which

⁴⁸ Frisken, "Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models," 35.

⁴⁹ Comay, "The Toronto Transit Commission and the Metropolitan Corporation: An Appraisal."

⁵⁰ Mees, *A Very Public Solution*, 269.

⁵¹ Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through.'"

⁵² Edward C. Banfield, "Ends and Means In Planning."

sought to determine, using quantitative methods such as demand models, the optimal transportation infrastructure network. Alan Black, in his examination of the Chicago transportation plan of that period, provides an excellent example of the model, in which formal policy options are developed and then ostensibly dispassionately evaluated based on pre-established criteria.⁵³

The 1963 service expansion, by contrast, is much better described by Lindblom's "selective limited comparisons" model. As Lindblom described, the "selection of value goals and empirical analysis of the needed action are not distinct from one another but are closely intertwined." The suburban bus grid was not a policy developed as a result of rational evaluation of a series of alternatives. Instead, it was a reaction to the institutional needs of the TTC to satisfy the political needs of the suburban members of Metro Council, which prompted the development of a policy that would effectively show the TTC flag in suburban areas at minimal cost. According to Lindblom, "The test of a 'good' policy is typically that various analysts find themselves directly agreeing on a policy (without their agreeing that it is the most appropriate means to an agreed objective)." This is quite an apt description of the situation in Toronto at the time: the TTC was reluctant to expand suburban service, while suburban councillors preferred a cut to their constituents' fares, but both could agree on an expansion of local suburban bus service. Finally, Lindblom argues that in the selected limited comparisons model, there is no serious evaluation of alternatives. While there was some quantitative analysis conducted by the TTC to determine where precisely the suburban expansions should be located, many of the

⁵³ Black, "The Chicago Area Transportation Study."

changes were the result of requests from local municipal councils, and in any case, there was never a serious study of other alternatives to providing suburban bus service.

The TTC successfully muddled its way through to the creation of a successful suburban transit system. This was a unique experiment in North America. No other city was seriously expanding local transit to the furthest-flung new suburbs in the early 1960s. At a time when much transit remained in private hands in the United States, and when many systems were cutting rather than expanding, the TTC embarked, ad hoc though the planning may have been, on a bold experiment. It was an experiment that undeniably succeeded. Countless Torontonians embraced the postwar dream of moving out to a house with a big yard in the suburbs. But, uniquely, they left the car in the garage much of the time and walked out to the main road to catch the bus because the service that was offered was attractive enough to entice them to make that choice. If the Metro and the TTC had taken the advice of those transit fatalists who suggested that suburban transit service was uneconomic and doomed to failure, that experiment would never have taken place. Instead, those bold decisions in the early 1960s set Metropolitan Toronto on a very different path from other urban regions across the continent.

Chapter 6: Big Plans, Land Use, and the Planning Board

Toronto has a long history of comprehensive planning. The city began with Governor John Graves Simcoe's establishment of a grid of streets extending from the lake. Toronto followed the North American trend with aesthetically oriented city beautiful plans for the downtown of the 1920s and 1930s, which remained mostly unbuilt aside from Union Station.¹ The 1960s saw a blossoming of a new, more comprehensive form of planning in the Toronto Area, led by the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board. It was later joined by the Provincial government, which embarked on its own regional planning efforts. The Planning Board was established at the same time as the new Metropolitan government, but its geographical remit was even more extensive. The plans were a curious hybrid: while there was considerable recognition of the need to shift people to public transportation, they retained all of the enormous plans for expressway expansion of the 1940s and 50s. This early planning was nevertheless quite influential in the course of development of the region—much more than later, more ambitious plans—and it included several elements that have enabled or facilitated the success of the TTC. Nevertheless, Metro planners were sceptical of the potential for transit to increase its mode share, were focused almost entirely on transit capital projects like subways, and played no meaningful role in the expansion of local transit service in suburbia that was the key turning point in the TTC's ridership performance. Between the cancellation of its expressways and the TTC's incremental approach to transit, Metro's sophisticated planning operation had a

¹ James Lemon, "Plans for Early 20th-Century Toronto; Lost in Management," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire Urbaine* 18, no. 1 (1989): 11–31.

relatively limited direct role in shaping Toronto's transportation system, but their broader policies around land use were important in enabling Toronto's transit success.

Paul Mees has argued that Toronto's suburban transit success is a result of comprehensive planning.² The history, however, clearly indicates that the high suburban service levels were created on an ad hoc, rather than comprehensively planned, basis. They were ratified later through the establishment of service standards. Mees is of course correct, however, that they were enabled by transit being administered by a single central authority at the TTC. Even if there was no comprehensive plan, the unified governance made universal standards not merely possible, but arguably inevitable. Still, the historical record shows that Toronto's transit success owes more to short-term political calculation, fortuitous circumstance, and incremental planning efforts like the 1963 expansion than it does to long-term, comprehensive regional planning.

One of the most strikingly progressive actions of the Frost government when it created Metro was to give the Planning Board responsibility for not only planning Metro itself, much of which remained agricultural, but also the surrounding Townships of Toronto (now Mississauga), Toronto Gore (now part of Brampton), Vaughan, Markham, and Pickering, as well as the towns embedded within them. The goal of the board's wide jurisdiction was to preclude "leapfrog" development beyond the boundaries of Metro.

² Mees, *Transport for Suburbia*, 97.

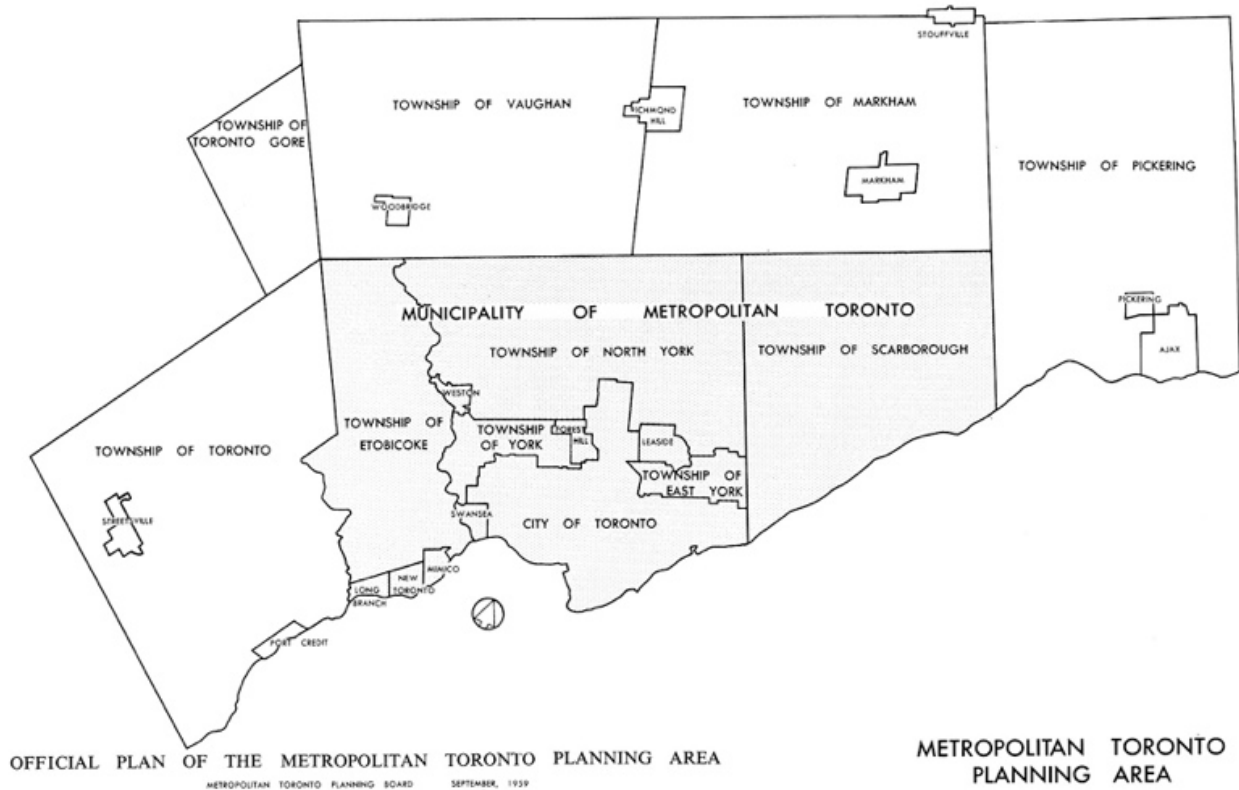


Figure 17: Map of the Jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board³

This approach swam against the tide of many of the dominant planning ideas of the period. The United Kingdom was then undertaking construction of numerous satellite “new towns,” inspired by the Garden Cities of Ebenezer Howard.⁴ France also developed a series of *villes nouvelles* in the 1960s, and in the United States, Rexford Tugwell’s Greenbelt, Maryland had linked the concept to the principles of the New Deal. The guiding motivation of the Metro planners’ idiosyncratic policy was not transportation, but rather water and sewage. Metro officials were especially anxious about growing numbers of

³ “Official Plan of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1959).

⁴ Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 138–41.

suburban developments using septic tanks for their sewage, which was a looming public health and environmental concern.⁵ Connecting the growing suburbs to water and sewage infrastructure was one of the key reasons for the creation of the metropolitan government.⁶ Plans for the region consistently recommended concentrating development in a band along the lake, with northern parts of the region remaining rural, to facilitate the provision of water and sewer infrastructure from the lake.⁷

In addition to these more prosaic reasons, the influence of planning consultant Hans Blumenfeld undoubtedly contributed to the Planning Board's outlook. In his writing, he had perspicaciously noted that satellite towns rarely function as independent communities. The greater distance from other parts of the conurbation necessitated by their geographical isolation simply results in longer commuting distances. At any rate, he argued that it would be impossible to restrain the size of successful satellite cities so that they did not grow into one another. "The fixation on the 'New Town,'" he wrote, "is rooted in a conscious or unconscious desire to escape from the complexities of our rapidly changing times into a simpler and stabler world that probably never existed and certainly cannot exist today."⁸

Though speculators had already acquired large development sites in the non-metro townships, Gardiner declared that the Planning Board was "doing everything possible to

⁵ For more on the problem of septic tanks in early postwar suburbia, see Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 87–118.

⁶ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "10 Years of Progress: Metropolitan Toronto 1953-1963."

⁷ White, *Planning Toronto*, 87–88; Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*, 242.

⁸ Hans Blumenfeld, "Alternative Solutions for Metropolitan Development," in *The Modern Metropolis: Its Origins, Growth, Characteristics, and Planning* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), 38–49.

block mass residential development in the rural areas.”⁹ The local municipalities were not always enthusiastic. Fred Armstrong, reeve of Woodbridge, compared the Planning Board to the Gestapo, claiming that it is undemocratic, “has too much authority and is strangling development in the fringe areas.”¹⁰

While local municipalities retained control of local planning matters, including the zoning of land not adjacent to metropolitan roads, the Board planned for the region as a whole. Since Metro did not pass a binding official plan until 1980, its role was largely advisory to both the province, which retained ultimate authority to approve major developments, and to local municipalities as they developed their own plans.¹¹ This belied its power, however, as the province almost always followed its recommendations, especially when it came to development approvals in rural areas. Using his influence with the provincial cabinet, Gardiner had established a practice that the provincial minister always consulted with the Planning Board before approving a project.¹² As a result, there was very little non-contiguous development in the two decades of the planning board’s jurisdiction beyond Metro.

The exception proves the rule, as White argues. The sole major development of the era that was not contiguous with the Toronto urbanized area was Bramalea, a 4,000-acre suburban master planned community located in the Township of Chinguacousy—just outside the planning board’s jurisdiction.¹³ Located well to the northwest of Metro, it was a truly isolated new town when construction began in the early 1960s, and it was planned

⁹ Alden Baker, “Land Deals Seen Threat In Rural Municipalities,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 23, 1956.

¹⁰ “Charges Fringe Areas Strangled by Gestapo of Metro’s Planners,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 16, 1957.

¹¹ Comay, “A Brief to the Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto.”

¹² Colton, *Big Daddy*, 157.

¹³ White, *Planning Toronto*, 133.

on thoroughly auto-oriented principles. The Planning Board's jurisdiction was limited to the municipalities contiguous to Metropolitan Toronto, and the small township of Toronto Gore provided a buffer. Bramalea was near the Town of Brampton, which was the largest town in the environs of Metro.¹⁴

Erin Mills was a similar and contemporaneous development project, but it sat within the Planning Board's jurisdiction in the Township of Toronto west of Metro. Located on a site several kilometres to the west of existing development and north of the lake, it was rejected, despite being proposed by E.P. Taylor, the very prominent industrialist who had built Don Mills. Despite his influence, he was not able to secure provincial cabinet assent to the project against the planning board's policies. It was only built later, in the 1970s, after the area was no longer subject to Metro planners' authority, and when existing development had already reached the site.¹⁵

Aside from these few notable exceptions, there were few attempts to build the type of non-contiguous new town, whether transit-oriented as in the European cases of Vällingby and, to some extent, Milton Keynes, or auto-oriented, as in Greenbelt, Maryland. Instead, development steadily progressed outward from the city centre, advancing in a solid front as arterial grid blocks were filled in. As the suburban townships gradually developed, the existing villages were subsumed and became little more than geographical expressions, marked only by the curiosity of a handful of prewar buildings

¹⁴ Bill Davis, who represented Brampton and succeeded Robarts as premier is frequently blamed or credited, depending on perspective, for Brampton receiving special privileges in terms of infrastructure and for its exemption from planning limits. This situation existed well before Davis was elected premier, and can likely be attributed to Brampton's position as by far the largest town in the area immediately around Metro, with a population of 18,000 people in 1961 in comparison with 5,000 in Streetsville and 7,000 in Port Credit. Before Davis, Brampton was represented by T.L. Kennedy, an equally influential figure who had served as premier for a year in the 1940s and was minister of agriculture until 1953. He was, however, a Streetsville native. His influence was not able to prevent Streetsville from being included in the Planning Board's jurisdiction.

¹⁵ White, *Planning Toronto*, 132.

amid a sea of postwar construction. The model contrasted with the American northeast, where many suburbs grew from existing villages, which retained their traditional core.

The new developments themselves were typically planned extensively by consultants working for developers, who were required to produce a detailed plan in order to receive development approval. They were often modeled on Don Mills, in some cases by explicit mandate: in the borough of Scarborough, developers were required to complete secondary plans for their projects, and the Scarborough planning commissioner specifically requested that they emulate Don Mills. Don Mills itself was simply an expression of broader trends in North American planning, as Richard White noted in his history of Toronto planning. “What occurred in Metropolitan Toronto from 1950 to 1965,” he wrote, “was not the cloning of Don Mills but the application of a new, internationally accepted style of suburban design, of which Don Mills is one of Toronto’s leading examples.”¹⁶

The Toronto model could trace its intellectual lineage to the “neighbourhood unit” model of Clarence Perry, described in his 1939 book *Housing for the Machine Age*. White attributes its spread in Toronto to Eugene Faludi, who was the most active of these consultants in the 1950s, but the model persisted for decades.¹⁷ Some developments, notably Don Mills, had pretensions to being self-contained communities, an aspiration that remarkably persists in the 21st century. It was, and is, of course entirely unrealistic for a neighbourhood embedded within a large metropolitan area, especially as two-income families became more common and household members had to commute to

¹⁶ White, 112–13.

¹⁷ White, 101–2.

entirely different locations. After the first few years, only about five percent of Don Mills residents were employed within the community.¹⁸ Though the idea had superficial appeal, it was never going to be possible to eliminate the need for travel by quarantining residents within their neighbourhoods, especially with the widespread availability of automobiles.

Each development—typically consisting of an approximately square-mile superblock created by the region’s arterial grid, and sometimes combined with adjacent blocks—was planned as a self-contained unit with schools and recreational facilities at its heart. Around them were houses on a warren of curvilinear streets. Businesses, including shops, were relegated to the fringes—in the form of strip malls along the arterials in the early years, and in later years often with shopping centres at the arterial intersections. They embraced Perry’s view that shops in the interior would “blemish upon residential quality” and would “occasion noise and traffic in an area where quiet and tranquility are desirable.”¹⁹

This model had both positive and negative effects for transit. On the one hand, the absence of leapfrog development meant that it was easy to extend surface transit along arterial roads as new concession blocks developed. The arterial grid of bus routes ran along roads lined with shops and other businesses, since those were the permitted locations for commerce. An often overlooked, but essential element of the neighbourhood planning was the provision of direct paths from internal neighbourhood streets to the arterials, which prevented transit users from needing to walk out of their way on meandering suburban residential streets. This in turn enabled the TTC to keep most of its

¹⁸ White, 110.

¹⁹ Arthur Clarence Perry, *Housing for the Machine Age* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1939), 68–71.

suburban routes on the direct arterial roads, rather than needing to take inefficient paths down circuitous neighbourhood streets to bring bus stops within reasonable walking distance.

On the other hand, the neighbourhood unit model precluded the “string of pearls” approach of new towns centred on transit stations that epitomized transit-oriented greenfield development in Europe, most notably in Scandinavia.²⁰ That particular model of new town could bring considerable benefits to the provision of public transportation, especially rail transit. New towns could be designed around railway stations, with the station at the heart of the commercial centre of the town surrounded by higher-density housing, and finally lower density housing in an outer ring. The European approach created a more attractive pedestrian environment within the neighbourhood.

Vällingby, a new town on the outskirts of Stockholm, is an illustrative example. Key to the distinctive approach was the European planners’ comparative toleration of mixed uses, and in particular their acceptance of commerce as being legitimately present at the heart of a community. Vällingby was built according to a high modernist plan in which the Tunnelbana (subway) station is at the centre of the district, with a civic square and shopping centre above. It is ringed by high-rise apartment buildings, as well as a handful of office buildings. Beyond are lower-density walk-up apartments and single-family homes. The entire neighbourhood is within a reasonable walking distance of the rail station. As a result of this approach, the large majority of residents who commute out of Stockholm’s new towns use transit, while the majority of residents who work in the new

²⁰ Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21st Century*, 111.

town walk or cycle.²¹ As Doucet and Doucet pointed out, this is in stark contrast with suburban Toronto, where many residents get to work by transit, but few walk or cycle to work within their communities.²²

Even when developments were consciously designed on the new town model, and designed at relatively high density, transit infrastructure was rarely included. Flemingdon Park, just south of Don Mills, is a master planned neighbourhood built in the early 1960s that included 180 acres dedicated to 4,884 units of housing, mostly in walk-up and high-rise apartment blocks. They were set, along with 35 acres of industrial and office park, in a Corbusian plan amid 140 acres of green space. Macklin L. Hancock, the president of Project Planning Associates who was lead planner for the neighbourhood and had previously been one of the main designers of Don Mills, described the project as being inspired by Vällingby. Transit, however, was a comparative afterthought. While Vällingby was planned entirely around its rapid transit station, Hancock's consideration of transportation access to Flemingdon Park in his review of the project focuses almost entirely on highways and on the neighbourhood's connections to the adjacent Don Valley Parkway. He simply notes that "The nearness to the central core makes future transit practicable," though he considers that such service will come in the long-term.²³

Nevertheless, Flemingdon Park demonstrates the success of transit in suburban Toronto. It has become a very transit-oriented community, as one of the city's busiest bus routes directly serves the neighbourhood, among several other routes. It has a high transit

²¹ Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 116–27.

²² Doucet and Doucet, *Streetcars and the Changing Geography of Toronto*.

²³ Macklin L. Hancock, "Flemingdon Park, A New Urban Community," in *Planning the Canadian Environment*, by L.O. Gertler (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), 205–28.

mode share, and the bus routes serving the area are very well used. This demonstrates the value of the frequent bus grid to enable neighbourhoods even at a distance from rail service to heavily use transit. It was even the subject of an experiment in the 1980s, in which the TTC significantly improved transit service to determine whether riders would follow; they did, in large numbers.²⁴ However, the lack of planning to introduce rail service when the area was built means that travel times remain long to many destinations and buses are overcrowded. There are plans in 2019 for an “Ontario Line” rapid transit route to serve Flemingdon Park, but it will come at a far higher cost than if it had been included as part of the community’s initial planning—as it typically was in European new towns.

Flemingdon Park’s large proportion of multi-unit housing was unusual, but not unique in newly developed areas of Toronto in the 1960s. Though the bulk of housing construction remained in the form of single-family homes, the Planning Board hesitantly encouraged increased population density in order to limit the cost of services, including transit. Still, they were not willing or able to make the goals of higher density legally binding; one planner’s proposal to mandate that no district’s zoning could permit density thirty percent below or fifty percent above the official plan’s goals for the district was dismissed by Jones as politically infeasible.²⁵ The planners also remained sceptical of the social cost of apartment living, with Jones arguing that high-rise apartment living was “anything but ideal for the needs of growing children or their parents” and instead favouring “middle density accommodation in non-apartment multiple dwellings.”

²⁴ Steve Munro, interview by author, February 13, 2020.

²⁵ Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*, 250.

Nevertheless, Jones pointed out that "some of the pockets of suburban apartment development are now sufficiently concentrated to support good suburban bus service."²⁶ Some suburban municipalities chose to permit apartment construction, largely due to the tax revenues it generated, and developers unexpectedly responded with numerous projects.²⁷ About two-fifths of apartments built from 1955-63 were in the large suburban municipalities of Scarborough, Etobicoke, and North York.²⁸ A number of high-rise apartment buildings were built near new subway stations, but many of them were, like Flemington Park, simply sited along major arterial roads. As Filion et al has explained, many of the densest pockets of residential construction in the city were not located on rail transit routes.²⁹

Social housing was also widely present in Toronto's suburbs, a policy that was initially driven, over substantial opposition, by Gardiner. By forcing through the Lawrence Heights project in North York over two years of objections from neighbours and the township, he set a precedent for the suburbs to accept a reasonable share of social housing.³⁰ This was in stark contrast to most American urban regions, where affordable housing in suburban municipalities did not generally come until decades later, and even then often only after lengthy litigation.³¹

²⁶ Murray Jones, "Metropolitan Man, Some Economic and Social Aspects," *Plan Canada* 4, no. 1 (June 1963): 18–19.

²⁷ White, *Planning Toronto*, 127–31; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 157–60.

²⁸ Jones, "Metropolitan Man, Some Economic and Social Aspects."

²⁹ Filion, McSpurren, and Appleby, "Wasted Density?"

³⁰ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 143–44.

³¹For example, the 1975 Mount Laurel decision in New Jersey, which required municipalities to zone in order to provide opportunity for low-income residents to live within their boundaries: *Southern Burlington County NAACP v. Mount Laurel*, No. 67 N.J. 151, 336 A.2d 713 (Supreme Court of New Jersey March 24, 1975).

The presence of apartments meant that, while many suburban areas remained typical suburban single-family communities, Toronto's overall suburban densities were somewhat higher than typical postwar suburbia in the United States. Nevertheless, they were not spectacularly higher. Despite decades of policies in Toronto promoting intensification, overall density of Toronto's suburbs is no higher than that of Los Angeles, and about 50% lower than Santa Ana in Orange County, where transit ridership is negligible. While these densities facilitated transit's success, they were certainly not sufficient, as the limited transit use in many similarly dense U.S. locations demonstrates. Furthermore, the availability of frequent transit was an essential ingredient for enabling suburban multi-family housing to be successful, and for the suburbs to achieve a relatively greater social mix.

The Planning Board itself consisted of members who were mostly affluent laymen, and who were later joined by representatives of the municipalities outside Metro and of agencies including the TTC. They were advised by a capable expert staff. It was ostensibly apolitical and technocratic, which was especially important given its expansive jurisdiction beyond Metro's boundaries. However, once Gardiner had secured his *ex officio* seat, he became the driving force.³²

In addition to its role of providing advice on individual development proposals, the board built up a highly sophisticated expert staff to prepare very expansive, and, in many cases, highly progressive comprehensive plans for the region. Its first commissioner was Murray Jones, a thirty-year-old, well-spoken graduate of Canada's first academic

³² Colton, *Big Daddy*, 152–54.

planning program at McGill University, who, with Gardiner's support, developed a sophisticated research operation.³³

The Board placed Toronto at the global cutting edge of transportation demand forecasting. The Cleveland Transportation Study, led by Thomas Fratar, developed the first computerized method for distributing future origin-destination travel data using expected urban growth, and based on this work the Eno Foundation for Highway Traffic Control published *Highway Traffic Estimation* in 1956, which introduced the concept to widespread adoption.³⁴ In the same year, the Planning Board was already using similar techniques in studies for the new east-west subway; by 1964, it had an enormous Univac 1107 dubbed the Metropolitan Traffic Computer, which was used to compile data from a variety of surveys into a comprehensive transportation demand model.³⁵

Eli Comay, who succeeded Jones in 1962, continued the intellectual tradition. He was a Detroit-native red-diaper baby and Harvard planning graduate who came to Toronto after McCarthyism forced him out of his job as a planner at the City of Chicago. Another key member was Hans Blumenfeld, also a serious thinker on planning issues, who served as a kind of internal consultant. Born near Hamburg, he also had communist inclinations and had participated in the planning of the Moscow Metro until he was expelled from the Soviet Union amid Stalin's Great Purge. Though he remained sympathetic to the Soviet Union, he moved to the United States, and then joined the Planning Board in 1955 at the age of 63, also after McCarthyism hampered his planning

³³ White, *Planning Toronto*, 82; Colton, *Big Daddy*, 154–55.

³⁴ Edward Weiner, "Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historical Overview" (U.S. Department of Transportation, September 1997), 23; Robert E. Schmidt and Moses Earl Campbell, *Highway Traffic Estimation* (Eno Foundation for Highway Traffic Control, 1956).

³⁵ "Proposed Transportation Research Program for 1964" (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1963), Hans Blumenfeld Fonds, City of Toronto Archives.

career in the United States. Len Gertler, a practicing planner and professor of planning at the University of Waterloo, described him as a “wise man scholar in the field.”³⁶ Though he was unquestionably a man of the left, it was the left of an earlier generation—the left of the five-year plans—a left that focused on goals like industrial growth and expanded infrastructure. He frequently clashed with the urban New Left that emerged in Toronto of the 1970s, which had a much more nostalgic and small-is-beautiful outlook, and which tenaciously fought his plans for expressways and urban renewal.

Transportation planning within Metro was coordinated by the Transportation Planning Advisory Committee between multiple agencies, including the TTC, the Planning Board, and the Roads and Traffic departments. More detailed operational planning was coordinated by the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, on which the same agencies were represented and which made its recommendations to Metro Council, the Planning Board, the operating agencies, or the local municipalities. Comay claimed that despite the many committees, in practice they “achieve[d] a reasonable degree of coordination.”³⁷

In 1956, the Planning Board produced its first major transit planning document, examining an East-West Subway and Expressway across the downtown. The report also included broader conclusions on transportation planning. It noted the importance of transit, including the need for surface transit to feed riders to a subway, since only downtown would have the density of origins and destinations needed to fill a subway by pedestrian access alone. Still, it also emphasized ample parking at subway stations. But

³⁶ Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*; Len Gertler, *Radical Rumbings: Confessions of a Peripatetic Planner*, vol. 1, Department of Geography Publication Series 59 (University of Waterloo, 2005), 56.

³⁷ Comay, “The Toronto Transit Commission and the Metropolitan Corporation: An Appraisal,” 8–9.

the Board focused on transit as means primarily of serving peak period commuter trips, especially to downtown, rather than as a comprehensive transportation system.³⁸

The Board released a draft official plan, largely produced by Comay, in 1959. It was a voluminous document complete with extensive aerial photography and a variety of well-designed maps. The transportation plan, which was expected to be refined with a more detailed subsequent report, did include a 37-mile subway network. In addition to the Bloor-Danforth-University route that was already approved, there were to be extensions to the Bloor-Danforth and Yonge lines into the suburbs, a subway to the northwest in the Spadina expressway alignment, and the subway on Queen Street that had been part of the city's plans since 1911. Nevertheless, the plan was pessimistic about the viability of transit, suggesting that rapid transit connected to feeder buses would be viable as a mode of transit only out to about 10 miles from the downtown core. Beyond that, it was assumed that the transit system would not be competitive in terms of travel time with the automobile, and suggested they be served by commuter rail with stations about 2 miles apart or with express buses on expressways. In those respects, it bore a strong resemblance to Bartholomew's coeval plan for Washington.

Like many "balanced" transportation plans of the era, most of the emphasis was on expressways, of which thirteen were proposed. The plan was developed using the planning board's pioneering computerized transportation demand model.³⁹ Even years later, in his autobiography, Blumenfeld argued that, while the idea that transportation could rely entirely on the automobile was "absurd," it was also folly to reject urban

³⁸ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, "Report on East-West Rapid Transit and Expressway: Part I (Analysis and Recommendations)," 42–45.

³⁹ White, *Planning Toronto*, 88.

expressways entirely. He was a consistent partisan of the “balanced” approach to transportation planning. Curiously, Cervero described Blumenfeld as an “arch-enemy of the car culture,” and as a leader in organizing opposition to Metro’s planned Spadina Expressway.⁴⁰ This assessment may have surprised Blumenfeld, who was one of the key designers of the Spadina project, and who argued in his biography that “the ‘stop-the-freeway’ dogmatism reflects the same primitive pseudologic as did the ‘clear-the-slums’ doctrine.”⁴¹ Freeways, he believed, are necessary to move goods and people travelling to dispersed locations, and they have lower neighbourhood impacts than moving traffic on local streets. He and the rest of the Metro planners were not simply throughput maximizing engineers, however. They were very much in the Moses/Bartholomew tradition of expressway design, favouring creative approaches to minimize the impact of urban expressways, like building through parks and decking overtop.⁴²

The plan included a regional expressway network to be built by the provincial government and an urban network to be built by Metro. The latter included five radial expressways totalling 103 miles, of which two (the Lakeshore—later Gardiner—Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway) were already underway. The plans called for a destructive expressway loop around the downtown core that would be familiar to the residents of most American cities. Planning scholar Jeffrey Brown described a contrast in expressway visions between the “traffic service” model, which was favoured by engineers and prioritized vehicle throughput, and the model favoured by planners that also

⁴⁰ Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 87.

⁴¹ Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*, 243.

⁴² Blumenfeld, 242–49; Jeffrey Brown, “A Tale of Two Visions: Harland Bartholomew, Robert Moses, and the Development of the American Freeway,” *Journal of Planning History* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 2005): 3–32.

incorporate a broader social and urban renewal role and seek to mitigate the negative effect of new highways on neighbourhoods. While none of the new urban highways were explicitly designed with the intention to demolish areas deemed slums, as was the case in many similar American projects, the necessary demolition was still unimaginable by present standards. This came despite considerable efforts to, as Brown would describe, sacrifice traffic capacity for neighbourhood compatibility. The Metro expressways, while impressive in scope on a map, were to have relatively few lanes and they followed routes that avoided residential neighbourhoods where possible. Still, communities ranging from the bohemian Annex, the heavily immigrant Christie Street corridor, and elite Rosedale were all planned to be bisected by new roads.⁴³

In the end, the unwieldy draft plan never actually became official, as the constituent municipalities of Metro viewed the idea of a binding metropolitan plan as an intrusion into their own planning jurisdiction. Gardiner, never enthused with comprehensive planning, did not quarrel. "It would have only stirred up trouble," he told his biographer Timothy Colton in an interview. "We were getting things accomplished for the metropolitan area without having to set it all down in a plan."⁴⁴ Instead, the plan acted as a broad vision for urban growth, as well as a guide for the development of metropolitan infrastructure.⁴⁵

⁴³ Brown, "A Tale of Two Visions"; Brian D. Taylor, "When Finance Leads Planning: Urban Planning, Highway Planning, and Metropolitan Freeways in California," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20, no. 2 (December 1, 2000): 196–214, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X0002000206>.

⁴⁴ Colton, *Big Daddy*, 156.

⁴⁵ "Official Plan of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area"; Rose, *Governing Metropolitan Toronto*, 53–64.

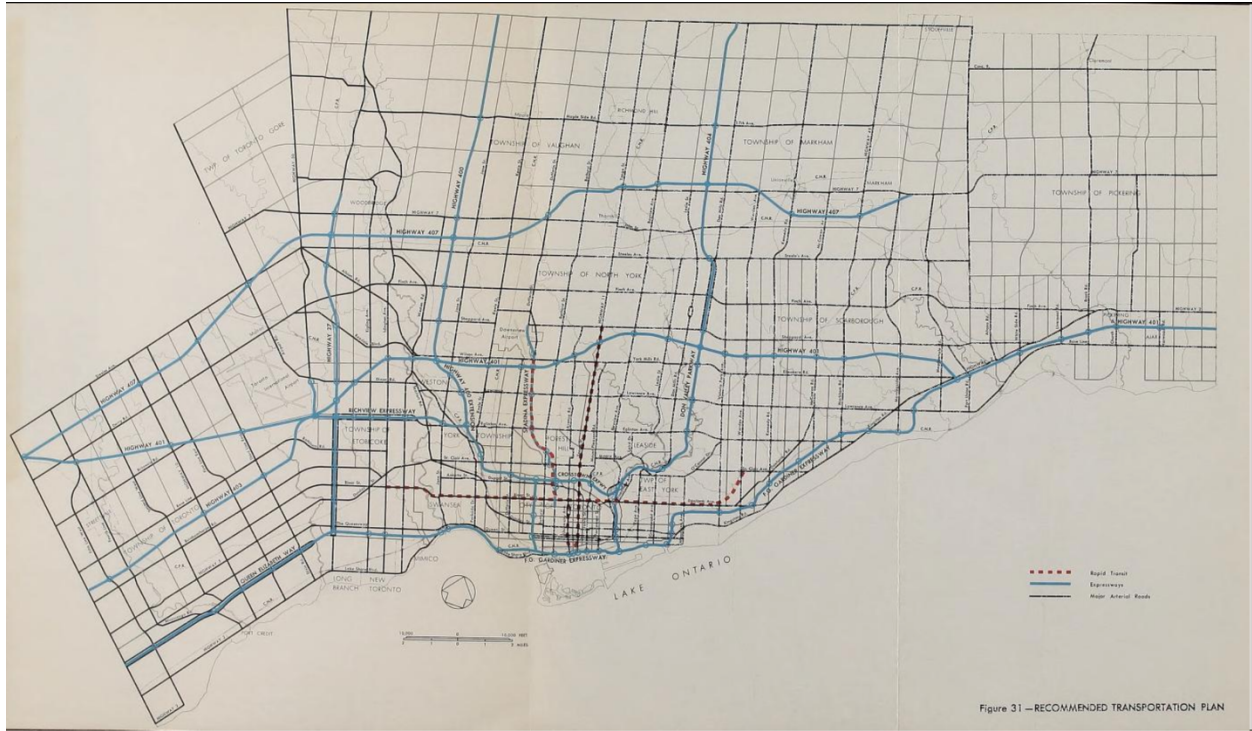


Figure 18: Recommended Transportation Plan, 1964⁴⁶

The promised refinement of the “preliminary” transportation plan from 1959 finally appeared in 1964. It included a significant land use component, which sought to favour contiguous development while permitting significant growth on greenfields and recognizing the increasing desire of industries to locate on the periphery. This effort produced a transportation master plan that largely ratified existing decisions. It included a network of expressways, the suburban portion of which was largely completed by the Province in the subsequent decades while the urban projects, to be built by Metro, were nearly all abandoned. The transit plan was mostly built over the following decade, and it brought rapid transit to Metro’s main suburbs. It included the Bloor-Danforth subway, then under construction, as well as a subway in the planned Spadina expressway corridor

⁴⁶ “Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 1964).

and a northward extension to the existing Yonge line. The most notable shift was in its position that a Queen Street subway was not warranted, suggesting instead a short tunnel through the core for the existing streetcars. While the Queen subway remained on the books, it began receding ever further into the distance.⁴⁷

A preparatory report produced by Traffic Research Corporation and Hans Blumenfeld tellingly described the significant projected volume of passengers on the surface transit network as “one of the most surprising and most important results.” It emphasized the “decisive importance of the maintenance of a fast, frequent, and extensive surface transit system, both as a feeder to the subways and as a supplement to them; as well as the need of a road system of a capacity sufficient to accommodate both private vehicles and public transit at acceptable speeds.”⁴⁸ Notably, their scenarios projected peak bus headways ranging from two minutes in the inner city to ten minutes in the outermost suburbs.⁴⁹

The final report nevertheless included only a cursory discussion on the “importance of surface transit,” which emphasized the provision of express buses since speed of service was deemed to be critical. The recommended plan included a “relatively modest express bus network,” with the subway fed by 12 express routes on arterial streets and 10 routes on expressways.⁵⁰ When suburban bus service was expanded in the 1960s and 70s, it did not follow this comprehensive plan’s proposals. Instead, nearly all new

⁴⁷ “Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan.”

⁴⁸ Traffic Research Corporation and Hans Blumenfeld, “Draft Report on the 1980 Transportation Plan for Metropolitan Toronto” (Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, September 1963), 37, Hans Blumenfeld Fonds, City of Toronto Archives.

⁴⁹ Traffic Research Corporation and Hans Blumenfeld, 55.

⁵⁰ “Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan,” 62.

suburban service consisted of more ad hoc improvements to local arterial buses. An arterial express bus network would not be introduced until the twenty-first century, while as of 2020 there is no comprehensive network of buses on the city's expressways.

In some respects, the philosophy behind the plan was quite progressive. While the goal of the plan was defined as "the efficient and safe movement of people and goods," it noted that such a goal cannot be easily defined. "Efficient movement certainly means fast movement," but they warned that "faster movement may also induce people to take longer trips." While some increases in mobility may be "good," as in the case of improvement to very poor transportation facilities that limited people's employment options to locations near their homes, they warned that excessive increases in mobility could simply lead to "sprawl." Avoiding a vicious cycle of the latter would require effective land use planning.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the criteria used to evaluate alternatives were characteristic of most traditional, predict-and-provide plans of the era: "1. Minimize total travelling time; 2. Maximize average travelling speed; 3. Minimize points of congestion; 4. Equalize accessibility within most parts of the urban area, and particular maximize accessibility to the central area; 5. Maximize the use of public transportation, in particular rapid transit; 6. Maximize the use of expressways."

As a plan, it bore a considerable resemblance to the heavily quantitative, rational-comprehensive plans being produced in many other regions, albeit with somewhat broader objectives. The Chicago Area Transportation Study of the late 1950s and early 1960s was one of the many similar plans, which were further spurred by a federal mandate for regional comprehensive planning in exchange for highway funds. As Alan Black

⁵¹ "Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan," 29–30.

described, the Chicago plan's goals were focused primarily on maximizing speed while minimizing cost and disruption. It also included a transit component—one new line and extensions to three existing lines—but there was no discussion whatsoever of bus service beyond planning two express bus routes on expressways. The primary emphasis was on a 230-mile expansion of the expressway network. Black's description of the Chicago plan could equally apply to the Toronto plan: "The major fault of CATS was failing to anticipate the issues that were to become important in transportation planning. The staff often talked about the future, but it was a future that extrapolated the past and maintained the status quo." Though Toronto's plan more seriously considered the importance of transit, its apolitical, quantitative approach failed to anticipate the substantial social changes that would come in the late 1960s—not least, in this case, the popular revolt against urban expressways and against mass demolition for public works more generally (see chapter 9).⁵²

As a transit plan, it largely compiled projects that were already approved or had long been discussed. As a result, with the notable exception of the Queen subway that remains unbuilt, it includes nearly the entire network that is in place as of 2020. The expressway plan was far less prophetic. Though most of the provincial highways were built, expressway revolts of the 1970s derailed virtually the entire urban Metro expressway network.

An updated official plan in 1966 was much less detailed than that of 1959, and it, too, was downgraded from a binding official plan to "a statement of the policy of the Metropolitan Corporation for the planning of future Metropolitan works and services and

⁵² Black, "The Chicago Area Transportation Study"; Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 5 (July 1, 2004): 674–706.

as a guide for future development in the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area.”⁵³ It included several subway extensions, but principal discussion was limited to recommendations that projects be coordinated between the Planning Board and the TTC. Buses did not rate a mention, beyond the need for good facilities for connection between bus and subway. While inner city stations were expected to be served by feeder buses, outer suburban stations were to be equipped with ample parking lots.⁵⁴

The outer suburban subway extensions were designed specifically to maximize the amount of parking available at the stations, and it was a constant focus of planning studies. Many of the outermost stations, particularly the terminals, were surrounded by large surface parking lots. They were of, at most, marginal significance, however, in terms of the stations’ ridership. A few years after it opened, Islington station, the western terminal of the Bloor-Danforth subway, was accommodating 50,000 riders per day. Though it was surrounded by a sea of parking, fully 70% of its riders got to the station by connecting bus.⁵⁵ At Warden station, the eastern terminal of the line, 17,000 riders connected to the bus. Only 2,000 used the parking lots, while another 3,000 were dropped off.⁵⁶ The TTC’s suburban bus grid, in place since 1963, received comparatively little attention in planning studies, but it was quite obviously the key to filling all the rail transit routes in the studies’ ambitious capital plans.

⁵³ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, “Metropolitan Plan for the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area” (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, December 1966), 1.

⁵⁴ Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board, 9–10.

⁵⁵ “A Review of Proposed Additions to Toronto’s Subway System,” Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan Review (Toronto: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto Transit Commission, Ontario Ministry of Transportation & Communications, January 1974), 16.

⁵⁶ “A Review of Proposed Additions to Toronto’s Subway System,” 37.

Though large-scale planning efforts of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board were never implemented as official plans, and the Planning Board spent little effort to analyze the effects of surface transit, some of its policies nevertheless significantly enhanced the prospects of public transportation in Toronto. The Board was quite successful in its early years at achieving its goals of preventing leapfrog development, encouraging somewhat higher densities, and expanding transportation infrastructure. This situation was not to endure. Despite far more ambitious planning studies led by the provincial government, the effectiveness of regional planning waned after the 1960s.

The TTC, Metro and the Province continually produced lavish studies throughout the period. An extremely thorough, 64-volume review of the transportation plan was initiated contemporaneously with the cancellation of Spadina. It was led by the city's long-time transportation guru—University of Toronto engineering professor Richard Soberman. The study acknowledged the end of the age of the expressway and, as a result, abandoned the “balanced” approach of the 1966 plan in favour of an explicitly transit-oriented approach to transportation infrastructure planning. The study lasted from 1972 to 1975, and as one of its participants, Juri Pill, described, it was "the second major 'postclassic' transportation study in North America, after Boston's." For the first time, citizens were actively consulted on the plan, though it was still largely guided by professional planners.⁵⁷

The review produced reams of valuable information about the system, which was then used to develop seven alternative scenarios ranging from intensification of the downtown core to regional dispersion. They were dubbed “Choices for the Future.” Most

⁵⁷ Pill, *Planning and Politics* Preface; Richard M. Soberman, “Rethinking Urban Transportation: Lessons from Toronto,” *Transportation Research Record* 1606, no. 1 (1997): 33–39.

significantly, they included options for dispersal of employment from downtown into suburban centres in each of North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough. This would become influential in years that followed, as it served the interests of both urban and suburban political leaders. The newly elected “Reform Council” in the City of Toronto was eager to prevent the demolition of historic downtown neighbourhoods for new office development, and were happy to see it shifted to suburban development areas. Suburban leaders, most notably North York’s mayor Mel Lastman, were eager to see their bailiwicks transformed into real cities with downtowns, rather than mere suburban appendages of Toronto.

This suburban subcentres approach would increasingly shape planning in Metro, especially after the new Central Area Plan of 1975, promoted by the City of Toronto’s reform council, actively embraced deflecting office development to the suburban subcentres.⁵⁸ The reformers were eager to reduce the pressure of development on the historic neighbourhoods of the downtown core, and so the plan sought to limit high-rise office construction to a small financial district. An additional measure tied office development to the provision of additional transit infrastructure, which made the anti-development reformers sceptical of new subways downtown.⁵⁹ The long-planned Queen subway was postponed to the distant future in the Transportation Plan Review. In the years that followed, most Metro plans for new rapid transit focused on the suburban centres, while some progressive downtown councillors like Jack Layton, later leader of

⁵⁸ “Central Area Plan Review: Proposals” (Toronto: City of Toronto Planning Board, 1975); Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, 218–19.

⁵⁹ White, *Planning Toronto*, 313–14.

the federal NDP, opposed downtown subway projects on the grounds that they would bring more development.⁶⁰

In the end, the reform councillors may have been too successful in their efforts to divert office development away from downtown. Initially, they were so concerned about the danger of office high-rise construction overwhelming the downtown core and destroying the city's comparatively small prewar neighbourhoods that they imposed a blanket forty-five-foot height limit on downtown development. That rule was eventually overturned by the OMB, and by the 1980s, the city was accepting some more limited high-rise construction. Given the opposition of many downtown councillors, plans for new subway projects in the core did not advance. The upshot has been that as downtown continued to remain a popular destination for office development, while the Yonge subway has been close to capacity for decades, downtown workers have increasingly sought to live as close as possible to their offices. This has resulted in an altogether unprecedented condominium construction boom since the 1980s that has necessitated the demolition of far more historic core neighbourhoods of the type that the reform council wanted to protect than would have ever resulted from unchecked subway-fed office development.

Suburban rapid transit projects did not have a record that was much more favourable than those downtown, even if the local councillors were more sympathetic. Unlike Washington and San Francisco, which built dozens of kilometres of new rapid transit in the 1970s and 1980s, Toronto built comparatively little despite reams of

⁶⁰ Michael Smith, "Toronto Council Backs Sheppard Ave. Subway," *Toronto Star*, June 17, 1986, sec. The Metro Page; "Tough Decisions for Metro Council: On Public Transit," *Toronto Star*, June 23, 1986, sec. Editorial; Steve Munro, interview.

ambitious plans. Choices for the Future was primarily a capital plan, with local bus service as usual discussed only tangentially. While expressway expansion was unsurprisingly excluded, each of the scenarios included a variety of rapid transit projects. A few subway extensions were included, including the Spadina line that was by then already underway, but a comprehensive network of new rapid transit routes criss-crossing the suburbs was to be built using a new, vaguely defined “Intermediate Capacity Transit System” that was to be cheaper and lower capacity than a subway, but still offer rapid transit service quality and speed. The planning processes’ most important consequence was the province’s development of GO Transit, a commuter rail system using the old railway corridors to bring commuters from outside Metro to Union Station downtown.

In 1972, the TTC finally abandoned its long-held plans to follow the rest of the continent and eliminate the downtown mixed-traffic streetcars. In part, it was a recognition that new downtown subways were not coming any time soon to replace them. More importantly, it was a result of the wave of urban activism that had surged following the Spadina battle. A group of streetcar advocates, notably including long-time Toronto transit activist and writer Steve Munro, fought successfully to secure the policy change.⁶¹

The upshot was that the TTC needed a new streetcar to replace the aging PCCs from before the war. The province responded by using a crown corporation, the Urban Transit Development Corporation, to develop the vehicle—dubbed the Canadian Light Rail

⁶¹ “Trams to Stay on St. Clair, Mount Pleasant: TTC Decides Street Cars Are Not Obsolete, after All,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 8, 1972; Thomas Coleman, “Passengers’ Views Ignored, TTC Told: Fan Club Comes to Street Cars’ Defence,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1972; Steve Munro, interview; Howard J. Levine, “Streetcars for Toronto Committee: A Case Study of Citizen Advocacy in Transit Planning and Operations,” in *Light Rail Transit: New System Successes at Affordable Prices*, vol. 221, Special Report (National Conference on Light Rail Transit, San Jose, CA: Transportation Research Board, 1988), <https://trid.trb.org/view/295719>.

Vehicle (CLRV). Many favoured using the new vehicle for the suburban ICTS routes in an early form of the LRT that would later become ubiquitous across North America.⁶²

The province had different ideas. In 1973, it announced a plan to cooperate with German company Krauss-Maffei on the development of a new automated maglev train that would fulfill the role of ICTS. Though Krauss-Maffei soon dropped out and its project for test track at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds was abandoned, the province decided to continue development of the technology using a more conventional steel-wheel-on-rail approach. Its first deployment did not come until 1985, when it was used for a feeder route between the eastern end of the subway and the Scarborough City Centre. Though the technology proved to be a considerable commercial success that was sold around the world, it was never used more widely in Toronto.⁶³

The province's automated light rapid transit technology earned the lasting enmity of light rail supporters, led most notably by Steve Munro, who continue to blame its lengthy development for the stalling of transit infrastructure construction and for preventing expanded use of the new streetcar on lines across the suburbs. The light rail insurgency persists to the present day, and temporarily became the basis of the city's transit planning with the announcement of a large light rail plan—dubbed “Transit City”—in 2007.

On the one hand, Metro's planning efforts helped to shape the region's urban growth in a relatively transit friendly manner. On the other hand, Metro's transit

⁶² Thomas Claridge, “Will Use Queen Street Trams: TTC Plans Street Car Line Extension of Subway through Scarborough,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 18, 1969; Jonathan Fear, “Scarborough Street Car Line Cut from 1977 TTC Works Budget,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1977; Richard M. Soberman, interview; Steve Munro, interview.

⁶³ The technology, eventually sold to Bombardier Transportation and renamed Skytrain, was used in Vancouver, Detroit, New York, and Kuala Lumpur, among other cities.

infrastructure planning was comparatively ineffective. From the late 1970s onward, countless hours of work and thousands of pages of comprehensive planning studies for transit in Toronto came to little. Even as ridership was growing steadily, and the city was increasingly becoming a model for transit across the continent, the elaborate plans resulted in remarkably little change. Few of their large capital projects were built, while the key decisions that shaped Toronto as a transit model—the provision of frequent bus transit in the suburbs and the zone fare reform—rated little more than a mention in the great plans. Toronto’s transit success is instead the result of political choices, adopted on an ad hoc basis, which set Toronto on a profoundly different path from its North American counterparts. It was the small decisions to make the bus run frequently past suburban residents’ houses, rather than ambitious plans for rapid transit, that made Toronto unique.

Chapter 7: Toronto in a North American Context

Toronto's policy of suburban transit expansion in the 1960s was enabled by unique political circumstances: a metropolitan government encompassing the entire developed area, a political constituency of suburbanites with little transit access who viewed themselves as being cheated out of a public service to which they were entitled. This stood in stark contrast with American cities of the same period, which did not have metropolitan governance and therefore where suburbanites did not have any stake in the region's transit system. Later, in the 1970s when regional transit systems became more common in the United States, racial animus increasingly drove a wedge between the central city and the new suburbs. This chapter will explore the history of transit planning in the United States from the 1950s through the 1970s, focusing in particular on Metropolitan Washington and the San Francisco Bay Area. These two metropolitan regions, with many similarities to Toronto, will then be compared with Metropolitan Toronto in terms of their transit policies of the period. This comparison will enable the determination of the key policy differences between Toronto and its American counterparts that made it possible for Metropolitan Toronto to sustain and even expand its transit ridership while American urban regions—even those implementing massive transit capital investments like Washington and San Francisco—were not so successful.

The absolute power of the provincial government over municipalities enabled it to impose a metropolitan government, even over suburban objections; the transfer of transit to the jurisdiction of that metropolitan government set the stage for Toronto's unique provision of suburban transit service. Furthermore, the timing of this move in the mid-1950s—when the central city remained the strong focal point of the region, when transit

remained a widely used and well-functioning service, and when the great postwar suburban boom was only beginning—was key to its success. Extending a successful and well-regarded transit system into brand new suburbs made success possible in a way that the late 1960s and 1970s expansion of transit in American urban regions, which generally tried to rebuild transit from scratch into already well-established auto-oriented suburban communities, could not hope to achieve.

Too Little Too Late: U.S. Federal Support for Transit

In many American cities, like Washington, D.C., transit in the early 1960s remained in private hands, rendering the idea of subsidy anathema. Even where transit was in public hands, like in New York City, Boston, and Chicago, it was generally expected to operate on a self-sustaining basis. The greater problem, however, was that in most American urban regions, the transit system's jurisdiction remained mostly confined to the prewar city—an area that was declining as a percentage of the metropolitan population and, in many cases, in absolute terms. Suburbanites had no political or financial role in administering or supporting transit. The effect of racism in the United States also hampered suburban transit expansion, as whites who had fled the increasingly diverse central cities for suburbia came to oppose transit expansion in order to maintain the ghettoization of African-Americans. The failure to expand high-quality local transit into the fastest-growing parts of American metropolitan regions left transit an increasingly irrelevant rump.

Throughout the 1950s, transit companies across the United States endured a vicious spiral of ridership decline, compounded by fare increases and service cuts. Rescue by the public sector was the only hope, but it typically came far too late and too reluctantly.

Highways, by contrast, had been the paragon of modernity for decades—a technology backed by a formidable economic lobby, and a technology that formed the basis of the aspirational vision of the American dream that Hollywood was selling the world over. In the popular and political imagination, highways were a public service, a national defence need, a symbol of progress. Transit was a monopolistic private business that inspired affection from no one—to this day, transit employees still refer to their agency as the “company.”¹ When federal transit subsidies finally began to flow in substantial volume in the 1970s, it was far too late to revive transit systems that had severely atrophied, and to prise drivers out of their cars in suburbs that had enjoyed little or no transit service since they had been built a decade or two earlier.²

Torontonians like Fred Gardiner were ahead of their time in recognizing the consequences of a transportation system that relied entirely on the automobile, but not by much. Intellectuals like Mumford and Jacobs were already criticizing the destruction wrought by the reconstruction of cities for the automobile in the 1950s and early 1960s. By the Kennedy Administration, American federal government officials were talking about the need for investment in transit—only a few years after Gardiner’s speeches of the late 50s. The difference is that when the intellectual tide against suburbanization, transit decline, and automobility turned, Toronto already had an institutional structure—a transit agency publicly owned by a metropolitan government—to rapidly put new policies

¹ There are a number of histories of the development of the American highway system and the accompanying automobile culture, including: Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy Since 1939* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012); McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path*; Gutfreund, *Twentieth-Century Sprawl*; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 157–72; Robert A. Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Lewis, *Divided Highways*.

² James A. Dunn, *Miles to Go: European and American Transportation Policies*, MIT Press Series in Transportation Studies 6 (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1981); David W. Jones, *Urban Transit Policy: An Economic and Political History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1985).

in place. In the US, that type of structure took decades to be developed, where it took root at all, and by then it was too late.

The number of revenue passengers carried by U.S. transit systems had declined from 13.85 billion in 1950 to 5.29 billion in 1973. Despite the explosion of the country's suburban population, the number of riders on suburban transit systems outside major cities declined from 882 million in 1950 to 294 million in 1973. Heavy rail (subway) ridership declined comparatively modestly, from 2.26 billion annual passengers in 1950 to 1.71 billion in 1973, as it was most time-competitive with the car, least affected by road congestion, and endured the fewest service cuts. Streetcar and tram ridership, by contrast, evaporated from 3.90 billion in 1950 to 207 million in 1973, as did electric trolley coach ridership, which dropped from 1.66 billion in 1950 to 97 million in 1973. These declines were not merely a result of the replacement of technologies considered obsolete. Bus ridership also declined from 9.42 billion in 1950 to 4.64 billion in 1973.³ As previously noted, Cleveland's transit ridership decline from 493 million riders per year in 1946 to 78 million in 1974 is an illustrative example.

As Toronto's planners were increasingly focusing on the importance of mass transit and on the inability of expressways to meet all of the region's transportation needs, American planners and government officials were slowly reaching the same realization. A 1962 report to the U.S. president by the secretary of commerce and the home finance administrator argued that "The major objectives of urban transportation policy are the achievement of sound land-use patterns, the assurance of transportation facilities for all segments of the population, the improvement of overall traffic flow, and the meeting of

³ "'74-'75 Transit Fact Book" (Washington, D.C.: American Public Transit Association, n.d.), 75.

total transportation needs at minimum cost. Only a balanced transportation system can attain these goals - and in many urban areas this means an extensive mass transportation network fully integrated with the highway and street system.” The report’s writers recognized that the financial state of mass transit systems—in many cases still private companies—made achieving such goals impossible: “A cycle of fare increases and service cuts to offset loss of ridership followed by further declines in use points clearly to the need for a substantial contribution of public funds to support needed mass transportation improvements. We therefore recommend a new program of grants and loans for urban mass transportation.”⁴

When the Urban Mass Transportation Act was passed in 1964, it set the precedent for federal capital funding for urban public transit. Though it was intended to provide two-thirds federal funding for projects, the amounts allocated by Congress were comparatively modest—only \$75 million in 1965 and \$150 million in the following two years—and no state could receive more than 12.5% of the total funding disbursed. The support was also limited because it did not include any operating funding, and many cities, let alone private transit companies, lacked funds to operate projects. Furthermore, federal funding was not available for the planning and engineering studies required to produce proposals to qualify for the grants. As George Smerk has argued, the federal lobbying power of the transit industry was fairly weak, partly since the main organization, the American Transit Association, primarily represented bus operators instead of the commuter rail and rapid transit that were of primary interest to the federal government.⁵

⁴ Secretary of Commerce and Home Finance Administrator, “Urban Transportation - Joint Report to the President” (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962).

⁵ George M. Smerk, “Development of Federal Urban Mass Transportation Policy,” *Indiana Law Journal* 47, no. 2 (1972): 249–92.

It would take many more years of decline before the ATA was able to secure federal operating funding for local bus transit.

Nevertheless, interest in public transportation and recognition of the limitations of expressways in urban areas was growing, even as new ribbons of concrete were spreading across the country and through the hearts of major cities. Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island published *Megalopolis Unbound* in 1966, a book insisting that mass transportation would be essential to meet the transportation needs of the emerging northeastern “megalopolis.”⁶ In the same year, UMTA funding was extended for an additional three years, and the act was enhanced with additional funds for research into new modes of transportation and with subsidy for struggling commuter railroads.⁷ In the following year, Lyndon Johnson followed the advice of Najeeb Halaby, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency, and created a separate Department of Transportation, permanently institutionalizing the federal role in transportation.⁸ The new department took over the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and elevated it from its relatively minor role in the Department of Housing and Urban Development into an equal of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration.⁹

Federal highway funding had created enormous growth in regional transportation planning, but there was increasing recognition that these engineering-driven studies generally ignored or marginalized mass transportation, and were overly focused on long-range planning.¹⁰

⁶ Claiborne Pell, *Megalopolis Unbound: The Supercity and the Transportation of Tomorrow* (Praeger, 1966).

⁷ Smerk, “Development of Federal Urban Mass Transportation Policy.”

⁸ Najeeb Halaby to Lyndon Johnson, June 30, 1965.

⁹ Smerk, “Development of Federal Urban Mass Transportation Policy.”

¹⁰ Weiner, “Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historical Overview,” 81.

When Nixon succeeded Johnson in 1968, he was unexpectedly friendly to further mass transit funding. His Secretary of Transportation John Volpe, a former governor of Massachusetts and enthusiastic highway builder who had been a prominent supporter of Nixon's presidential nomination, grew increasingly sympathetic to public transportation and hostile to urban expressways over his tenure.¹¹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Nixon's senior advisor on urban issues, had raised concerns as early as 1960 about the impacts of urban highway projects.¹² These policies gained further impetus after the Arab oil boycott and energy crisis in 1973.

In calling for the new transit funding, Nixon sent a message in August 1969 to Congress indicating that "Public transportation has suffered from years of neglect in America. In the last 30 years, urban transportation systems have experienced a cycle of increasing costs, decreasing funds for replacements, cutbacks in service, and decrease in passengers." He noted that transit fares had almost tripled since 1945, while ridership had decreased by two-thirds. Transit industry profits before tax had declined from \$313 million in 1945 to \$25 million in 1967, and 235 bus and subway companies had gone out of business. He argued that a federal mass transportation funding program comparable to the Interstate Highway Program was needed in order to provide a "truly balanced" transportation system. He therefore proposed a \$10 billion funding package over 12 years, beginning with a doubling of funding to \$300 million in the first year and rising to \$1 billion annually by 1975. Both public and private transit companies would be eligible for funding, although private transit companies were disappearing rapidly at the time. Given

¹¹ Rose and Mohl, *Interstate*, 147–57.

¹² See Daniel P. Moynihan, "New Roads and Urban Chaos," *The Reporter*, April 14, 1960, which marked him as one of the earliest strong critics of the urban expressway program.

the date, he unsurprisingly referenced a recent national engineering achievement that has since become cliché in public transportation debates: "The Nation which has sent men to the moon would demonstrate that it can meet the transportation needs of the city as well."¹³

Congress responded by passing the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act in 1970, which hewed closely to Nixon's request and delivered the large-scale, sustained federal capital funding for transit that would enable numerous major rail transit projects across the country.¹⁴ As this modest capital funding was being disbursed, private transit companies were imploding. By 1974, though they still represented 45% of transit companies, they only carried 6% of national riders.¹⁵ Increasing public ownership of transit made government subsidy more palatable.

After years of lobbying by the transit industry for federal operating support, they finally got their wish in 1974, when the National Mass Transportation Assistance Act authorized \$4 billion in operating funding, on a 50-50 funding basis allocated by population and population density, as well as \$7.3 billion in capital funding with an 80% federal share.¹⁶ Operating funding amounted to \$3.4 billion by 1980 and endured until 1998, albeit after reductions during the administration of Ronald Reagan, who repeatedly

¹³ Richard Nixon, "Public Transportation Program, Message from the President, House Document No. 91-145, A Document: Document No. 2," *Legislative History of the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970: P.L. 91-453: 84 Stat. 962: October 15, 1970*. 1 (August 7, 1969): [i]-4.

¹⁴ "An Act to Provide Long-Term Financing for Expanded Urban Mass Transportation Programs, and for Other Purposes," Pub. L. No. 91-453 (1970).

¹⁵ "Transit Fact Book" (Washington, D.C.: American Public Transit Association, 1981).

¹⁶ Weiner, "Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historical Overview," 96-97.

asked rhetorical questions on a theme of "Why should someone in Sioux Falls pay taxes so that a bureaucrat in Washington, D.C., can ride to work on transit?"¹⁷

For most transit systems, though undoubtedly very welcome, the federal funding was little more than life support for skeletal systems that were being used only by those who were unable to drive, as well as by some peak-period commuters to declining but still-congested downtowns. As a result, transit agencies were largely unable to take advantage of the explosion in the cost of driving amid the energy crises of the 1970s. Transit ridership only rose from 5.25 billion in 1972, before the energy crisis, to 5.67 billion in 1976 (8.0%), though the national average price of gas increased by 64%. The TTC, at the same time, had a 19.7% ridership increase, helped along by the elimination of zone fares.¹⁸ Spiraling inflation also placed further pressure on transit agencies, as the price of fuel and wage costs both increased rapidly.¹⁹

Greater Washington

Washington is, in many ways, a transit policy model. Its Metro was a technological and architectural marvel. Its suburban counties in Maryland and Virginia delivered the most impressive transit-oriented development on the continent. But this shining success was built on a decaying foundation. Metro, before its recent maintenance debacle, was an outstanding service for those fortunate enough to be able to walk to and from its stations,

¹⁷ Brendon Hemily and Michael D. Meyer, "The Future of Urban Public Transportation: The Problems and Opportunities of a Changing Federal Role Two Views on Urban Mass Transportation," *Transportation Law Journal* 12, no. 2 (1981): 287–300; Reasa D. Currier, "Public Transit: Looking Back and Moving Forward - A Legislative History of Public Transportation in the United States and Analysis of Major Issues for the Authorization of the Surface Transportation Bill," *Transportation Law Journal* 37, no. 2 (2010): 119–42; James A. Dunn, *Driving Forces: The Automobile, Its Enemies, and the Politics of Mobility* (Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 93.

¹⁸ "1976 Annual Report" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, November 25, 1977).

¹⁹ "'74-'75 Transit Fact Book"; "Transit Fact Book."

or to be able to find a space in one of its park-and-ride lots. By contrast, the local bus service—the only transit service within walking distance of most of the region’s population—is seriously limited by comparison. When Metro was created, bus service was an afterthought, a badly frayed remnant of an old transit system that had few defenders.

That fate could perhaps have been avoided. In 1955, only two years after Metro took over the TTC, the Senate passed a bill to permit a public takeover of Capital Transit, the private transit monopoly that had paralyzed the city with a 52-day bus strike that summer. At the last moment, however, a bid of \$13.54 million from New York investors led by O. Roy Chalk was accepted, and the renamed D.C. Transit remained in private hands, precluding significant subsidy.²⁰ If the infamous muckraking syndicated columnist Drew Pearson can be believed, President Eisenhower’s brother-in-law may have helped facilitate approval of the deal.²¹ With the system remaining in private hands, significant public subsidy remained anathema. It was also largely excluded from broader regional transportation planning efforts.

Transit planning and the coordination of transit operations across the region—particularly in the fast-growing suburbs—were hampered by the region’s spread over two states and the District of Columbia. The divisions made the transit system’s routes especially complex. Transit experts had described the system “as the most complicated urban bus system in the United States, and perhaps in the world,” with riders needing to keep track of an estimated 1,140 distinct routes operating during rush hour.²²

²⁰ Senator Thomas Eagleton, “District of Columbia Transit Act,” Report (U.S. Senate, April 7, 1970).

²¹ Drew Pearson, “Ike’s Brother-In-Law Helped the Purchase of Washington Streetcars and Buses (The Washington Merry-Go-Round)” (The Bell Syndicate, Inc., July 13, 1956), American University Digital Research Archive, <https://auislandora.wrlc.org/islandora/object/pearson%3A22358#page/1/mode/1up>.

²² “The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority,” Committee Staff Report for the Committee on the District of Columbia (House of Representatives, December 31, 1974), 14.

Nevertheless, active federal involvement—loosely paralleling the Province of Ontario’s role in addressing regional governance in Toronto—helped the Washington area build regional institutions more effectively and quickly than in most other American urban regions—especially ones that crossed state lines. Jerome Alper, a lawyer appointed to the staff of a commission created by the three jurisdictions to address the fragmentation, outlined the problems in a 1955 report. Nearly all transit service in the 1950s was provided by five private companies, with Capital Transit, serving the District of Columbia as well as the adjacent area of Maryland, carrying the vast majority of riders, and other companies serving suburban riders in Maryland and Virginia. The integration of the system was poor; even though Capital Transit operated both Maryland and D.C. services, most riders were forced to change vehicles at the boundary. There were limited transfer fare discounts between the companies’ networks on intrastate trips, and none at all for interstate trips. The lack of coordination was acknowledged to be a contributing factor to the decline in transit ridership, especially given the rapid population growth of the Virginia and Maryland suburbs.²³

The problem of poor suburban service was understood in Washington. A staff report for the House Committee on the District of Columbia outlined the issues: “The present route network is a remnant of the past, when the majority of the area’s population still resided within the City of Washington and suburbs were few.” Even in the city, many routes were obsolete: “Route changes have not followed the population [...] The best-served routes are still where the city’s heart was twenty years ago.” Though the District could still rely on relatively abundant service, service in the newest suburbs was next to

²³ Jerome Alper, “Transit Regulation for the Metropolitan Area of Washington, D.C.” (National Capital Planning Commission and National Capital Region Planning Council, December 1955).

non-existent. “The situation in the suburbs is even worse,” the congressional staff wrote, “where routes have not begun to reach new population centers. The routes continue to be aimed at commuter travel into Washington, with the greatest void left in inter-county travel.” That was the type of travel that had been enabled by the TTC’s suburban grid of frequent bus routes.²⁴

Motivated by the threat of a federally imposed agency, both states and the District were able to devise a joint transit regulatory agency for the region. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission (WMATC) was an interstate compact modeled on the Port Authority of New York, and its first act was to force the companies to honour each other’s transfers and coordinate their schedules. The compact was ratified by the federal government in the National Capital Transportation Act of 1960, which also included the establishment of the National Capital Transportation Agency (NCTA), a federal agency charged with continuing transportation planning in the region following the Bartholomew-led Mass Transportation Study of 1959.²⁵

“We choose to go to the moon,” President Kennedy declared in September 1962. It was a stirring assertion of American aspirations toward technological progress through collective effort. Transportation, though certainly more prosaic, was also an arena where the Kennedy administration sought to pursue a path that updated concepts of modernity from the freedom of the private car to a more balanced program that also included collective modes of transportation. President Kennedy therefore appointed C. Darwin Stolzenbach, a very different figure from the austere highway engineers of 1950s

²⁴ “The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority,” 14–15.

²⁵ Alper, “Transit Regulation for the Metropolitan Area of Washington, D.C.”; Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 95–98.

transportation planning, as the NCTA's first administrator. He was a federal government and academic economist who had been an activist against the Northwest Freeway.²⁶ The NCTA developed a new transportation plan in 1962 that was, unsurprisingly given its leader's background, less highway-oriented than the 1959 plan. Nevertheless, it still proposed spending \$826 million on new highways, as well as \$793 million for an 83-mile rail system stretching deep into the suburbs. The rail network was promised to be financially self-sustaining. As in Toronto, the idea of transit as a business died hard.²⁷

Local bus service was almost entirely absent from the report. Though it mentioned in passing the need for good local bus service, and, like the coeval Toronto plan, it recommended several express bus routes on freeways, it was an almost entirely rail-focused transit plan. In Toronto, the TTC was under the direct control of suburban councillors, who agitated for service improvements in their constituencies, while in Washington, suburban transit remained in the hands of failing private companies with only loose government regulation. Unlike the close coordination of new TTC subway service with connecting bus service expansion, in Washington the two modes remained entirely separate.

The NCTA's plan faced considerable opposition from the highway lobby, as well as from O. Roy Chalk, the owner of D.C. Transit (the renamed Capital Transit), who presented a fanciful alternative proposal for a "combination monorail-subway and underground automobile highway."²⁸ Still, legislation for a smaller, initial 23-mile system

²⁶ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 45–47.

²⁷ *Transportation in the National Capital Region: Finance and Organization: A Report to the President for Transmittal to Congress* (National Capital Transportation Agency, 1962).

²⁸ "A Report to the President of the United States on Transportation in the Washington Metropolitan Area and Its Environs" (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Transit System, Inc., July 9, 1963).

mostly within the District was submitted to congress. The bill stalled shortly after President Kennedy's assassination, but was revived amid optimism following the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. The updated plan was similar—25 miles in length—and was expected to cost \$431 million, of which 65% would be funded through bonds to be paid off with farebox revenue, leaving \$100 million to be covered by federal grants and a \$50 million contribution from the District. To appease labour unions, which had opposed the previous plan for operation by a federal agency because it would preclude binding arbitration, the legislation called for operation by a private company. To mollify the highway lobby, the agency largely vacated the field of highway planning, which was to be left to the highway engineers. After Stolzenbach was replaced by the less controversial Walter McCarter, an elderly retired general manager of the Chicago Transit Authority, the bill passed and was signed into law in 1965.²⁹

In the following year, the two states and D.C., building on their earlier transit regulatory compact, created a new compact that established the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to take over the development of the regional transit project.³⁰

Maryland and Virginia had no interest in a rapid transit system that barely left D.C., so a much more ambitious plan was approved in 1968 following intense negotiations. The 97.2-mile system would stretch deep into the Maryland and Virginia suburbs and was expected to cost \$2.525 billion, of which one-third was expected to be funded from the fare box, \$575 million would come from the local governments, and

²⁹ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 54–63.

³⁰ “Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Compact of 1966,” Virginia Compacts, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/compacts/washington-metropolitan-area-transit-authority-compact-of-1966/>.

\$1.151 billion from the federal government.³¹ The system—dubbed Metro by designer Massimo Vignelli—broke ground only a year later. It was far more ambitious than anything in Toronto, both in scale and in design.

With the creation of WMATA, Washington had the type of regional transit governance that Toronto had secured in 1953. It came, however, a decade later—a decade during which transit ridership had declined precipitously—and, most importantly, it entirely omitted local bus service, which remained in private hands.

As the TTC was rapidly expanding transit throughout the metropolitan area, the private DC Transit—mostly limited to the shrinking prewar city—was failing. Ridership was declining, service was decaying, and fares were decreasing. From 1963 to 1970, the regulators permitted an increase in fares from 25 to 40 US cents, following Chalk’s persistent requests. Over the same period, the TTC fare rose from 14 cents to 25 cents.³² The percentage increase was comparable, though the TTC’s fare remained far lower. Though Chalk tried to entice suburban riders with modest service improvements and newer buses, meaningful suburban improvements without subsidy could only come at the cost of the standard of service in poorer DC. This drew the ire of the Metropolitan Citizens Advisory Council, which petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit to overturn a fare increase. In their petition, they argued that the suburbs had received disproportionate service improvements even though suburban services were

³¹ “Adopted Regional Rapid Rail Transit Plan and Program” (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, March 1, 1968); Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 116–18.

³² Throughout the period, the Canadian dollar was pegged at approximately 92.5 U.S. cents. Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 177; “Ninth Annual Report”; “1970 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto” (Toronto Transit Commission, 1970).

unprofitable.³³ These types of battles between jurisdictions were also present in Toronto, but the political structure of Metro and the public ownership of the TTC meant that Metro was able to subsidize suburban service so the TTC could make improvements without needing to sacrifice service in the City of Toronto.

The sincerity of Chalk's commitment to sustainable transit could also be gainsaid. He continued his predecessor Louis Wolfson's practice of extracting as much capital as possible from the company. Though his syndicate invested only \$500,000 in equity, with the rest of the \$13.5 million purchase price secured by mortgages on the company's assets and a loan from Wolfson, D.C. Transit paid \$500,000 per year in dividends for six consecutive years, amounting to most of the operating profits over that period. He also failed to make necessary contributions to the employee pension fund, accumulating a \$2 million deficit.³⁴

By 1969, the company was near insolvency and two bills were introduced in Congress, one to permit the subsidization of DC Transit, and the other to enable its outright takeover by WMATA. The latter was strongly favoured by the government of the District of Columbia. The system was already receiving subsidy in the amount of \$1.4 million for the provision of school services, as well as \$600,000 in tax relief from the District.³⁵ WMATA's takeover was clearly driven by the need to integrate Metro with local bus services. The Senate report on the legislation described the problem: "As the Metro rapid transit system moves toward reality, the need to coordinate all forms of mass transit

³³ "Petition for Review of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission Order No. 684" (United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, May 10, 1967).

³⁴ "Petition for Review of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission Order No. 684."

³⁵ "Statement of Thomas W. Fletcher, Deputy Mayor-Commissioner, District of Columbia," § Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Subcommittee on Fiscal Affairs (1969).

grows more apparent. Within 6 years, five spines of the Metro System will extend into the Maryland and Virginia suburbs, requiring a massive system of feeder bus service along new routes, on new schedules matched to Metro routes and timetables, and with a fare structure integrated with Metro fares.”³⁶

The San Francisco Bay Area

Like Washington, the San Francisco Bay Area was also the location of a highly ambitious and innovative regional rapid transit system. Its genesis came even earlier than Washington’s, with the California Legislature’s creation of the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Commission in 1951 following local discussions dating back to the end of the war. The Bay Area was unusually well-suited to transit, given the large water barriers on three sides of San Francisco, which created serious traffic choke points. Only the Bay Bridge, opened in 1936, connected San Francisco to its large hinterland in the East Bay. The bridge included an important transit component, as the Key System streetcars that ran throughout the East Bay used its lower deck to reach the San Francisco business district.

The Key System operated an impressive network, but it experienced the same decline undergone by streetcar companies throughout the United States as they faced increasing competition from the automobile. The Key System had the notable fate of being acquired by National City Lines, a company controlled by General Motors and a variety of other companies in the automobile and petroleum industries. NCL later became infamous following congressional investigations that argued the company deliberately

³⁶ Senator Thomas Eagleton, “District of Columbia Transit Act.”

bought streetcar systems to close them down and replace them with buses. Bradford Snell, who presented to the congressional hearings, was the most notable proponent of the conspiracy thesis, which was made famous through its fictionalization in the 1988 film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Scholars like George Smerk and Glenn Yago also supported the thesis.³⁷ Others are more sceptical of the importance of General Motors and its partners' role, since streetcar systems were rapidly replaced by buses in the 1950s even where NCL was not involved.³⁸ Regardless of cause, the Key System declined quickly in the 1940s and 1950s, and its last streetcars trundled over the Bay Bridge in 1958, after which their tracks were removed for additional road lanes.

By then, however, the Rapid Transit Commission already had an elaborate plan for a new 123-mile regional rail system.³⁹ The plans were further refined by the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, which was formed by the state legislature in 1957. Its sleek, computer-controlled trains would whisk passengers from suburban stations, under the bay, to downtown San Francisco.⁴⁰ In the suburbs, they would be elevated so that they were not caught in automobile traffic as were the Key System's streetcars. Like Washington's Metro, it would be a technological showpiece for a region that was to become the world's technology capital. Even its employees' uniforms would be of the

³⁷ Bradford C. Snell, "American Ground Transport: A Proposal for Restructuring the Automobile," § Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly (1974); Glenn Yago, *The Decline of Transit: Urban Transportation in German and U.S. Cities, 1900-1970* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984); George M. Smerk, *Readings in Urban Transportation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

³⁸ Martha J. Bianco, "Kennedy, 60 Minutes, and Roger Rabbit: Understanding Conspiracy-Theory Explanations of The Decline of Urban Mass Transit," Discussion Paper 98-11 (Center for Urban Studies, College of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University, November 17, 1998).

³⁹ Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Hall and MacDonald, "Regional Rapid Transit" (San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Commission, 1956).

⁴⁰ The system was also planned to serve San Mateo County, to the south of San Francisco on the peninsula, and Marin County, to the north over the Golden Gate Bridge. Those plans were later dropped after the counties were unwilling to fund the project.

moment. Its designers and engineers had little interest in emulating past transit systems, as the TTC had emulated New York's, among others. Instead, it would redesign rapid transit from first principles.⁴¹ Even its track gauge did not match the North American standard; instead, a wider gauge, matching the standard gauge of the Indian subcontinent, was chosen to improve ride quality at high speeds.

A few weeks after the angst of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the voters of the three counties looked to the future with optimism and approved a \$792 million bond issue to fund a futuristic 71.5-mile rapid transit network. It was an enormous figure, coming even before federal funding was made available two years later. Like all other major infrastructure projects at the time, it faced tremendous cost overruns amid the rapid inflation of the 1970s. In the end, it cost about \$1.6 billion, of which approximately 20% was provided by the federal government.⁴² It was completed with astonishing rapidity: the final segment of the initial system opened in 1974, after only about a decade of construction. The original Washington Metro plan would wait until the 21st century for completion.

Though the BART District encompassed three counties, there was no broader regional governance structure. As Robert Cervero has described, the Bay Area lacked the regional planning counterpart to Toronto's Metro, which has left station-area development decisions to be determined by market forces and local municipalities. As a

⁴¹ Parsons Brinckerhoff, Tudor, and Bechtel, "Engineering Report: Rapid Transit for the San Francisco Bay Area" (San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, June 1961).

⁴² Michael Harris, "Optimistic Glow Has Faded," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1972; "A History of BART: The Project Is Rescued," Bay Area Rapid Transit, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.bart.gov/about/history/history3>.

result, he argued, there has been considerably less development around stations.⁴³ The comparison is equally unfavourable with Washington, where, despite the lack of regional governance, considerably greater efforts were made to implement transit-oriented development.⁴⁴ Cervero omits, however, that the absence of regional governance of all transit—as opposed to just regional rapid transit—meant that the BART system, even more than Washington Metro, was not embedded at all in a unified transit system. Rather, it was designed and has served as a commuter service largely oriented to park-and-ride, and its connections to local transit remain limited.

The comprehensive plan for BART made virtually no mention of surface transit. Though it called for "An Integrated Transportation Network," that section included no mention of buses--only of the need to connect with freeways and to provide ample parking at stations. The nascent AC Transit District, which was created by Alameda and Contra Costa Counties to acquire the bankrupt Key System in 1959 and would operate local transit service in most of BART's East Bay service area, did not receive a single mention.⁴⁵

The new district, like WMATA, was charged with planning an entirely new transit system. Unlike WMATA, it never acquired the local transit services. San Francisco's Municipal Railway (Muni) carried on serving the city, with some of its streetcars shifted to feed into a two-level tunnel under Market Street that was shared with BART. AC Transit also remained a separate district.

⁴³ Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 91–99; Robert Cervero, "Rail Access Modes and Catchment Areas for the BART System," Monograph, BART@20 (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, September 1995).

⁴⁴ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 221–42.

⁴⁵ Parsons Brinckerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel et al., "The Composite Report: Bay Area Rapid Transit" (San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, May 1962).

Like DC Transit, the Key System was performing poorly when AC Transit took over, with only 66 annual rides per capita in 1957, compared with 214 in Toronto in the same year (per capita ridership in the City of San Francisco was more comparable to Toronto), although its buses were in rather better condition than DC Transit's.⁴⁶ The Key System had made no effort to serve the rapidly growing new suburbs, but AC Transit had the advantage of taking over the private operator fourteen years earlier than WMATA, which meant that it was before many of the region's suburban areas had been built and established their travel patterns. The system was created following the approval of a \$16.5 million bond issue by Alameda County and Contra Costa County voters, thanks in large part to support from a well-organized Citizens' Committee for Better East Bay Transit.⁴⁷ Like the TTC and WMATA's Metrobus, its service area was a blend of pre-war cities, wartime boom towns, and post-war suburbs, all of which had very different characteristic built forms. The two counties combined for a population of 1.317 million in 1960, much of which was concentrated in historic cities like Oakland and Berkeley. Thousands of others had come from across the country to work in the booming war industries of Richmond. Suburban growth in places like Hayward and Fremont was also surging in the 1950s and 60s.

The plans developed by consultants DeLeuw Cather for the new system were relatively modest, but they included a network of five new express bus routes to serve both cross-regional trips and travel across the Bay Bridge to San Francisco. The new system

⁴⁶ "Summary of a Public Transit Plan for Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District" (San Francisco: De Leuw, Cather & Company, August 1958).

⁴⁷ "Official Statement Relating to \$16,500,000 Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District Special Transit Service District No. 1 General Obligation Bonds" (Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, August 17, 1960), <http://www.actransit.org/wp-content/uploads/Bond-Issue-Official-Statement.pdf>; A.H. Moffitt, Jr., "Citizens Committee for Better East Bay Transit," Letter, n.d.

would, in a more modest fashion than Metro and BART, seek to improve the image of transit by acquiring more comfortable new buses—standard GMC “New Look” models that AC Transit dubbed Transitliners—and building improved bus shelters. They also planned improvements to frequency, though the recommended improvements were still rather limited. Typical midday and evening headways on local routes were to improve from between 30 and 45 minutes to between 20 and 30 minutes. Transbay routes were to improve from 45-minute to 30-minute midday headways, while most were to have no evening service at all. Finally, there were to be 55 miles of new routes, a few of which would be in the fast-growing new suburbs, but most of which remained within the established cities.⁴⁸

The Toronto Contrast

Metropolitan Toronto, Greater Washington, and the San Francisco Bay Area had much in common in the latter half of the twentieth century. All three were fast-growing regions with dynamic economies. They retained strong urban cores, not suffering the severe urban decay that faced many other American cities. Indeed, both Washington and the Bay Area are American transit success stories. They did not face the transit implosion experienced by Toronto’s fellow Great Lakes metropolises like Detroit and Cleveland. Instead, they both were the site of enormous transit capital investments that produced technologically sophisticated showpiece rapid transit systems. Despite similar starting

⁴⁸ “Report to the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District on a Public Transit Plan for Special Transit Service District Number One” (San Francisco: De Leuw, Cather & Company, August 1959); “Annual Report 1959-60” (Oakland: Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 1960).

points and more impressive investment, however, their transit ridership performance never quite matched that of Toronto.

Some of this divergence is undoubtedly due to external factors. There are certainly cultural factors, including the crisis of urban racial segregation that was growing in salience throughout the postwar period. Specific political choices, however, played an equally important role. The creation of a metropolitan government in Toronto, charged with administering *all* transit—including local buses—at a time when local transit remained well-used and well-regarded was the most important of those choices. A Canadian provincial government, constitutionally granted total power over municipalities, was able to impose the regionalization of transit over reticent municipal governments. The State of California, or the Federal government, in the case of Greater Washington, had no such power. While Toronto was busily extending its high-quality local transit network from the historic city to serve the new suburbs as soon as they were built, Greater Washington and the Bay Area’s local transit was fragmented and, in the former case, controlled by poorly administered private companies. Toronto’s subway system was planned in intimate coordination with the already-established frequent suburban bus services. Routes were planned and stations were designed to facilitate connections, and fares were seamlessly integrated. In the two American regions, their new rapid transit systems were planned entirely in isolation from local bus service. In Washington, the local bus service had descended into dilapidation just as the gleaming new trains entered service. The failure to create a truly integrated, multimodal transit system until local service was too far gone made it impossible for Greater Washington and the Bay Area, despite all of their investments, to match Metropolitan Toronto’s transit ridership performance.

Many scholars have argued that Canadian and American cities differ so greatly that the opportunity for genuine comparison is limited. Using polling data, some have argued that Canadians have different cultural values—most significantly, for this comparison, they are more tolerant of government intervention and regulation.⁴⁹ It is unquestionably true that Canada did not have the same history of racist exclusion, segregation, and white flight that plagued American cities.⁵⁰ Throughout the postwar period, downtown neighbourhoods in neighbourhood often remained important centres of employment and sought-after places to live.

Preeminent Toronto transit scholar and consultant Richard Soberman credits the greater success of transit in Canada vis-à-vis the United States to four main factors: more receptivity to metropolitan government, meaning more coordination between transportation and land use planning; generally higher density, perhaps partly due to the lack of mortgage interest tax deductibility; the absence of a program similar to the Interstate Highway Act; and "innovative" provincial initiatives toward transit finance and technology.⁵¹

There is undeniable truth in all of these assertions, but they can be overstated. While Canadians may be, broadly speaking, more tolerant of government intervention, Americans have shown themselves to be very willing to embrace government involvement in the transportation sector. The Interstate Highway program is the most notable example, but the federal government, beginning in the 1960s, also provided significant

⁴⁹ Michael A. Goldberg and John Mercer, *The Myth of the North American City: Continentalism Challenged* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); Michael Adams, Amy Langstaff, and David Jamieson, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2004).

⁵⁰ See, for example, Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

⁵¹ Soberman, "Urban Transportation in the U.S. and Canada: A Canadian Perspective," 101.

funding for transit. In the postwar decades, American metropolises like San Francisco and Washington built far more impressive rapid transit networks than Toronto, and all of them were publicly funded. While many American cities experienced disinvestment in prewar neighbourhoods, particularly as a result of redlining and white flight, many American downtowns remained important centres of employment. Toronto also witnessed mushrooming growth of employment in suburban office and industrial parks.⁵²

The considerably greater power of the provincial government with regard to cities in comparison with most American states was critically important, making it possible to impose metropolitan government regardless of whether residents were receptive—many suburbanites were adamantly opposed. Still, many American transit agencies were expanded to encompass their metropolitan areas, including in New York, Washington, and Cleveland, among others. The difference was timing: while Toronto's metropolitanization of the TTC occurred in the 1950s, while it was still financially and reputationally strong, the same process occurred in most American cities at least a decade later, when transit was in a parlous state. The lack of metropolitan land-use planning in most American regions was unquestionably a hindrance, though some suburbs like Arlington and Montgomery counties in Greater Washington were nevertheless highly successful at implementing transit-oriented development.⁵³

Soberman also makes a valid point about the higher density of Canadian metropolitan areas, and his suggestion that it is related to the lack of mortgage interest

⁵² Gunter Gad, "The Suburbanization of Manufacturing in Toronto, 1881-1951," in *Manufacturing Suburbs: Building Work and Home on the Metropolitan Fringe*, by Robert Lewis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Gunter Gad, "Office Location Dynamics in Toronto: Suburbanization and Central District Specialization," *Urban Geography* 6, no. 4 (1985): 331-51.

⁵³ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 221-42.

deductibility is plausible. The existence of metropolitan planning may also be a factor. However, it is still important not to overstate the difference. The current population density of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is lower than that of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and similar to that of the San Francisco Bay Area.⁵⁴

While Canada had no equivalent to the Interstate Highway Act, this distinction is more meaningful in the intercity sector, where the expressway network is far less extensive. Within Greater Toronto, while expressway mileage is lower than in similar American cities, the provincial government still built a vast network of highways. It includes the 16-lane Highway 401 that is, by some measures, the busiest expressway in the world. While Toronto's urban expressway network is far less extensive than those of Detroit, Los Angeles, or Houston, it is not strikingly different from San Francisco's or Washington's.⁵⁵

The most important point raised by Soberman may be the last: provincial involvement. While the Government of Ontario's embrace of fanciful transportation technologies, like maglev, was not of great significance, their timing in embracing subsidy in the early 1970s was critical, as will be explored in Chapter 9. Still, at the same time, the U.S. federal government also began providing capital and operating subsidy for transit in major American cities.

There are undeniable divergences between Canadian and American cities, but the differences are not so great that the cities cannot be compared, and that lessons cannot

⁵⁴ Aaron A. Moore, "Comparing the Politics of Urban Development in American and Canadian Cities: The Myth of the North-South Divide," *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, January 1, 2014, 242.

⁵⁵ Katherine M. Johnson, "Captain Blake versus the Highwaymen: Or, How San Francisco Won the Freeway Revolt," *Journal of Planning History* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 2009): 56–83; Moore, "Comparing the Politics of Urban Development in American and Canadian Cities."

be drawn from one that are applicable to the other. Aaron Moore has gone so far as to argue that that North American cities are all distinct from one another, which means that cross-border comparisons are no less valid than comparisons within countries.⁵⁶ Greater Washington and the San Francisco Bay Area are among the most comparable American regions to Greater Toronto. Their total populations in the postwar years were similar, and all three were fast-growing and economically successful—they were the destination of legions of migrants from declining regions.⁵⁷ They all retained strong downtown employment districts, and have relatively high metropolitan density by American standards. They all have regionalized transit systems that invested considerable sums in building rail transit networks in the postwar decades.

Though Toronto’s population density is somewhat higher than that of most American cities, and the suburbs also have somewhat more apartment buildings than most American suburbs, it is not unreasonable to assume that the existence of viable public transportation in the suburbs also enabled the existence of the high-density development in a symbiosis, rather than simply the reverse. Furthermore, as Filion et al have argued, Toronto’s scattered clusters of high rises—many located far from major transit infrastructure—mean that the relatively high density offers less direct benefit for transit than could be assumed from the raw figures.⁵⁸

Toronto’s transit in the 1950s was not so different from American cities of the period. As we have seen, it also suffered serious ridership declines. Its stunning turnaround in the 1960s, which set it on a very different track from its American

⁵⁶ Moore, “Comparing the Politics of Urban Development in American and Canadian Cities.”

⁵⁷ Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban*, 3–5.

⁵⁸ Filion, McSpurren, and Appleby, “Wasted Density?”

counterparts, had not been foreseen. Consultants Simpson and Ong's forecasts of the TTC's growth had not been especially conservative for the 1960s. They were projecting far higher growth for the TTC at 8.25% from 1962 to 1972 than was achieved by many American transit systems over that period.⁵⁹ In that decade, while Toronto's ridership rose by 28.7%, New York City's subway ridership declined by 16.4%.⁶⁰ Unlike the TTC, which served the booming suburbs, the New York City Transit Authority remained locked into the five boroughs, which were experiencing declining population.⁶¹ Even after the State of New York under Nelson Rockefeller created a regionally oriented Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 1968, the new authority's *Program for Action* included no plans for extending the subway or frequent bus service into the fast-growing suburbs.⁶² As of 2019, only two bus routes on Long Island, a region with a population of nearly three million people, operate at least half-hourly until midnight, seven days per week. Even in cities with strong transit systems in the United States, frequent local transit service rarely exists outside the prewar city.

The Washington region's population was comparable to but somewhat larger than that of the Toronto region, with 2.2 million in 1960, compared with 1.78 million in greater Toronto in 1961. It was expected to add 1.2 million residents by 1980, much like greater Toronto's expected growth of 1.02 million by 1980. It was the third-fastest growing

⁵⁹ Simpson & Curtin Consultants and Joe R. Ong, "Economic Study of Bloor-Danforth Subway and Proposed Extensions."

⁶⁰ Peter Derrick, *Tunneling to the Future: The Story of the Great Subway Expansion That Saved New York*, 1st edition (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 44.

⁶¹ The population of New York City stagnated from 1950 to 1970, largely owing to growth in outlying suburban areas of the boroughs of Queens and Staten Island counterbalancing population losses in established neighbourhoods, before plummeting by 10.4% from 1970 to 1980.

⁶² "Metropolitan Transportation: A Program for Action," Report to Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor of New York (Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority, February 1968).

metropolitan region in the country from 1940 to 1960, owing to the immense wartime expansion of the federal government, much of which was located in the downtown core. Its suburbs were also quite dense by American standards, at about 3,750 people per square mile in 1962, the second highest among major American metropolitan areas after Los Angeles and compared with 3,953 per square mile in North York in 1961.⁶³

Washington had been no outlier in the precipitous decline of transit system ridership. 40.3% of annual trips per capita disappeared from 1952 to 1962. This was not terribly different from Toronto, however, where there was a similar decline of 37.6% over the same period.⁶⁴ Toronto, however, reversed the decline following its suburban expansion, while Washington did not. From 1962, Toronto's total ridership increased by 29.1% to 1972, more than keeping pace with population growth.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, in Metropolitan Washington, ridership declined in the same period despite rapid population growth. In 1963, the D.C. Transit system had 120.7 million riders, while the total transit ridership in the region, including Virginia buses, was 128.8 million in 1971. Excluding Virginia buses, which accounted for approximately 21% of regional ridership, ridership in DC and Maryland was down by about 15.7%.⁶⁶

Ridership outside the historic prewar area was modest. Of 198 million riders in the region in 1954, 157 million (79.2%) were within the District of Columbia, and many of the

⁶³ *Transportation in the National Capital Region*; "Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan," 6.

⁶⁴ Simpson & Curtin Consultants and Joe R. Ong, "Economic Study of Bloor-Danforth Subway and Proposed Extensions," 35.

⁶⁵ "1972 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto."

⁶⁶ "Petition for Review of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission Order No. 684"; Thomas E. McCardell (The Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service), "Comparative Analysis of Washington, D.C. Transportation System and Transit Systems in Other Metropolitan Centers," § House Committee on the District of Columbia (1974), 31; Jackson Graham, "Answers to Followup Questions to March 27, 1974, Hearing on Metrobus Operations," § House Committee on the District of Columbia (1974), 53.

remainder were in prewar communities in Maryland and Virginia. Even after nearly two decades of dramatic suburban population growth, ridership entirely outside D.C. was only 8.2% of the total in 1972, and much of that was in long-established communities like Alexandria. Ridership in Toronto's suburbs, which excludes all prewar areas unlike the Washington figure, was 14.5% of the total in 1972.⁶⁷

This is unsurprising since the number of vehicle-miles operated in Metropolitan Washington was down from 52.6 million in 1950 to 48.7 million in 1974.⁶⁸ Though there was some service expansion outside DC—from 16.245 million vehicle-miles in 1950 to approximately 22.6 million in 1974—the increase came at the cost of service within the District.⁶⁹ The increase also paled in comparison with the TTC, which nearly quintupled service in new suburbs, from 5.14 million vehicle-miles in 1955 to 24.01 million in 1972.⁷⁰

After its takeover of DC Transit, WMATA quickly acquired new buses, eliminated certain transfer fares, and implemented modest service improvements. Larger service improvements were stymied, however, in part by ballooning deficits. While Toronto expanded its system during the boom years of the 1960s, and it received support from the province in the more challenging 1970s, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, WMATA had

⁶⁷ Jackson Graham, Answers to Followup Questions to March 27, 1974, Hearing on Metrobus Operations, 53; “1972 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

⁶⁸ Alper, “Transit Regulation for the Metropolitan Area of Washington, D.C.”; Jackson Graham, Answers to Followup Questions to March 27, 1974, Hearing on Metrobus Operations, 247.

⁶⁹ Alper, “Transit Regulation for the Metropolitan Area of Washington, D.C.”; Charles S. LeCraw, Jr., Vice President, Wilbur Smith and Associates, “WMATA 1974-75 Bus Plan,” § House Committee on the District of Columbia (1974); Jackson Graham, Answers to Followup Questions to March 27, 1974, Hearing on Metrobus Operations, 247.

⁷⁰ “Ninth Annual Report”; “1972 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

taken over a system that required significant investment just to keep running, and it had done so at a time of unprecedented inflation.⁷¹

In 1974, a year after the public takeover of DC Transit, WMATA operated 48.7 million bus-miles. In the same year, TTC operated 53.8 million surface vehicle-miles, as well as 29.7 million subway car-miles (Washington's Metro was not yet operating).⁷² The WMATA service area also had a substantially higher population, 2.73 million in 1970, than Metro Toronto's 2.09 million.

WMATA did plan growth for the bus services, but it was still far from catching up with the TTC. They projected growth to 183,400 vehicle-miles on weekdays, up from 127,600 in 1974. The TTC was already operating a daily average of 147,308 surface vehicle miles in 1974, but that understates Toronto's service because the figure includes weekends, when service is more limited, and also excludes the TTC's 81,365 car-miles of subway service. The distinction is evident in service standards. Even after an overall increase of 44% in weekday vehicle-miles, the WMATA service standard remained limited, with maximum headways of 30 minutes for base routes within the Capital Beltway, and one hour outside the Beltway.⁷³ This paled in comparison with the TTC, where many routes operated every 15 minutes or better even outside peak periods in the suburbs, and the downtown streetcars operated so frequently that the TTC used the slogan "Always a car in sight."⁷⁴ The upshot was a significant difference in ridership: 124.8 million WMATA riders in 1973, compared with 332.1 on the TTC.

⁷¹ Statement of Cleatus Barnett, Chairman, Board of Directors, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

⁷² Jackson Graham, Answers to Followup Questions to March 27, 1974, Hearing on Metrobus Operations.

⁷³ Charles S. LeCraw, Jr., Vice President, Wilbur Smith and Associates, WMATA 1974-75 Bus Plan.

⁷⁴ "Normal Day Service in Operation in Metropolitan Area as of Tuesday January 7th, 1964" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1964), <https://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/reports/19640107-service-summary.pdf>.

Schrag argues that the takeover of DC Transit, while unavoidable, was devastating to WMATA. Firstly, the fantasy of generating an operating profit by designing Metro as a luxury commuter service died quickly after the takeover of DC Transit's bus services, which had a clientele that could not afford luxury fares. Secondly, the dismal state of the DC Transit system, and the poor relationship between its management and employees, badly tarnished the high-tech utopian image that had been carefully cultivated for Metro.⁷⁵ Over 239 of its buses had to be immediately discarded for their salvage value since, as WMATA's chairman explained, they were "worthless for any other use."⁷⁶ The takeover of DC Transit and the other private bus companies made it possible for WMATA to become a genuine transit agency, but the state of DC Transit's infrastructure was so poor and the ensuing reputation of buses—especially in the suburbs—was so negative that there was no groundswell for suburban bus expansion as there was in Toronto in the early 1960s when the TTC operated a well-regarded service. It was also simply too late: Toronto expanded bus service into suburbs as they were built in the 1960s, but by 1972, many of the suburbs were already built and their travel patterns well-established.

Toronto's subway served as a model for Metro, but also as a cautionary tale. As historian of the Washington Metro Zachary Schrag recounts, "When NCTA publicist Cody Pfanstiehl needed to convince suburbanites that not all subways were as filthy and as noisy as New York's, he took community leaders to Toronto."⁷⁷ Though the cleanliness and efficiency were noted, the spartan architecture of the Toronto subway, with its low ceilings and frequent columns, provoked less approbation. The Washington Metro's

⁷⁵ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 176–77.

⁷⁶ Statement of Cleatus Barnett, Chairman, Board of Directors, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

⁷⁷ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 70.

planners had higher aesthetic aspirations—they wanted to build a showpiece for the American capital. It would be a metro with stations that could compete aesthetically with the Stalinist underground palaces in the capital of the United States’ Cold War rival, albeit in a contemporary brutalist, rather than antediluvian pseudo-baroque style. These aspirations came paradoxically at a time when Nikita Khrushchev was promoting a more restrained and economical Soviet architecture. The Washington designers were not wrong that Toronto’s subway was quite a conservative operation. When it opened in 1954, its design and operations were not significantly different from prewar subways in cities like New York. The NCTA wanted to build a system that was an aesthetic and technological marvel.⁷⁸

Despite its architectural opulence, technological superiority, passenger comfort, and far greater geographical extent, Metro was never able to match the more muted Toronto subway’s ridership. Even after the comprehensively planned 103-mile system was completed in 2001, Metro had 631,817 riders on an average weekday.⁷⁹ The TTC’s far more limited 68.3 km (42.4 mile) rapid transit network carried 851,000 passengers in the same year, even after a decade of ridership stagnation.⁸⁰

When the TTC built subways into the new suburbs in the 1960s and 70s, it was extending service into an area that already had a well-developed local transit network. The Washington Metro, by contrast, was built into suburban Maryland and Virginia, but WMATA was barred by legislation from operating a bus service. When the calamitous

⁷⁸ Schrag, 70–83.

⁷⁹ “Metrorail Average Weekday Passenger Boardings” (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, 2019), https://www.wmata.com/about/records/public_docs/upload/2019_historical_rail-rideship_May-weekday-avg.pdf.

⁸⁰ “2002 Operating Statistics” (Toronto Transit Commission), accessed November 27, 2019, <https://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/reports/operatingstatistics2002.pdf>.

financial state of the private DC Transit, as well as four smaller suburban bus systems, forced WMATA to take them over, they were a pale shadow of their former selves. Service in the fast-growing new suburbs was negligible—Metro riders were expected either to drive to the station or to live in adjacent transit-oriented development.⁸¹ In Toronto, already by 1973, 83% of the total Metro population was within 1,000 feet of transit service, and 94% of those were receiving service with an average peak headway under 15 minutes.⁸² As a result, the Washington Metro—the most successful postwar rapid transit system in the United States—had 5,554 daily riders per route-kilometre in 2008, prior to recent ridership declines due to a maintenance crisis. The TTC’s subway ridership per kilometre was 16,800 in the same year.⁸³

The East Bay region, similar in population to Metropolitan Toronto in the 1960s, also provides an illustrative comparison. When Alameda and Contra Costa Counties took over their private transit systems, they launched a meaningful expansion. It was not, however, on the scale of the TTC’s expansion, especially in the suburbs. It also was not nearly as well integrated into the BART rail system being built at the time. The latter focused instead almost entirely on park-and-ride as a means to access its suburban stations.

Large ridership increases soon followed AC Transit’ post-public-takeover expansion. From the 1960-61 fiscal year to 1961-62, annual ridership increased by 4.5%

⁸¹ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 175–79.

⁸² “Strengths and Weaknesses - Part 1: Public Transport,” Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan Review (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto Transit Commission, Ontario Ministry of Transportation & Communications, March 1973).

⁸³ Jonathan English, “Three Approaches to Suburban Transit: Washington, San Francisco Bay, and Toronto,” *Urban Toronto*, November 26, 2013, <http://urbantoronto.ca/news/2013/11/three-approaches-suburban-transit-washington-san-francisco-bay-and-toronto>.

to 49.99 million after a service increase of 1.65 million annual vehicle-miles or 8.2%.⁸⁴ The service increase was significant—comparable in percentage terms to the 1963 expansion of TTC service—but it came from a considerably lower base, and the pace of increase, unlike in Toronto, was not sustained over the following years. While the 1963 TTC expansion was concentrated entirely in the fast-growing suburbs, as the City of Toronto already had excellent service, much of AC Transit’s service expansion was to bring service in the prewar cities up to a minimum standard and to augment commuter service across the bay.

From 1962 to 1965, service stagnated—from 21.85 million vehicle miles in 1961-62 to 22.66 million in 1964-65—and ridership increased only very modestly to 53.28 million in 1964-65.⁸⁵ The absolute level of service is strikingly low when compared to the TTC, which had a service area of comparable population and operated 56.17 million vehicle-miles in 1964-65—13.58 million in the new suburbs alone.⁸⁶

While AC Transit added some service through the 1960s and early 70s, and there were modest ridership gains, the service increases were too small to make transit sufficiently attractive to most potential riders, especially outside peak periods. Even by 1973-74, shortly before the first phase of BART opened, AC Transit was operating 27.1 million service miles, and ridership was 55.22 million (a modest increase from 1964-65 owing to a new method of counting passengers that, if applied, would have reduced that year’s ridership to about 51 million).⁸⁷ However, the two counties grew by 24% from 1960

⁸⁴ “Annual Report (Year Ended June 30, 1962)” (Oakland: Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 1962).

⁸⁵ “Annual Report 1964/1965” (Oakland: Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 1965).

⁸⁶ “Twelfth Annual Report.”

⁸⁷ “AC Transit Annual Report 1973/74” (Oakland: Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, 1974).

to 1970, so the agency was hardly keeping pace. The service distinctions are most evident when the system is examined in greater detail. While the vast majority of Torontonians, including residents of new suburbs, were within walking distance of a bus route that ran frequently all day by the 1970s, it was not until 1974 that the entire City of Fremont, with a population of nearly 125,000, had any midday bus service at all. Even after the service was introduced, it was only half-hourly on weekdays, hourly on Saturdays, and did not run at all on Sundays.⁸⁸

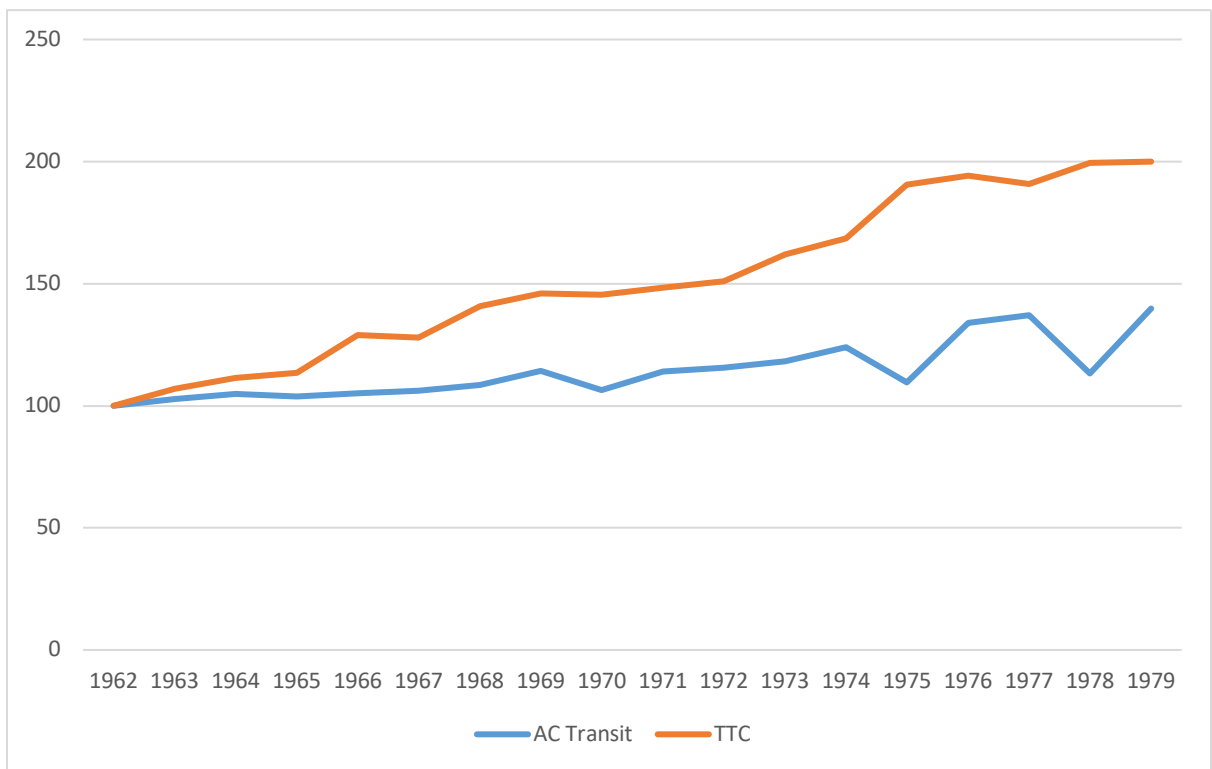


Figure 19: TTC vs AC Transit Change in Vehicle-Miles of Service (1962=100)

The combination of federal funding, contracts from BART for feeder services, and the energy crisis caused AC Transit’s ridership to grow later in the 1970s and early 1980s,

⁸⁸ “AC Transit Annual Report 1973/74.”

but subsequent service cuts have since resulted in large drops in ridership. In 2018, ridership was about the same as it was in the early 1960s—51.76 million, though the population of the two counties had doubled to 2.84 million people from 1.32 million in 1960. Service was, strikingly, worse than it was in the early 1960s: only 19.9 million annual service miles.

AC Transit did improve service in its early years, but the improvement was far too modest to meaningfully change the way it was perceived in the region. The gains were concentrated largely in the established prewar neighbourhoods of cities like Oakland, and on Transbay commuter routes, while local transit remained modest to nonexistent in the fastest-growing parts of the region.

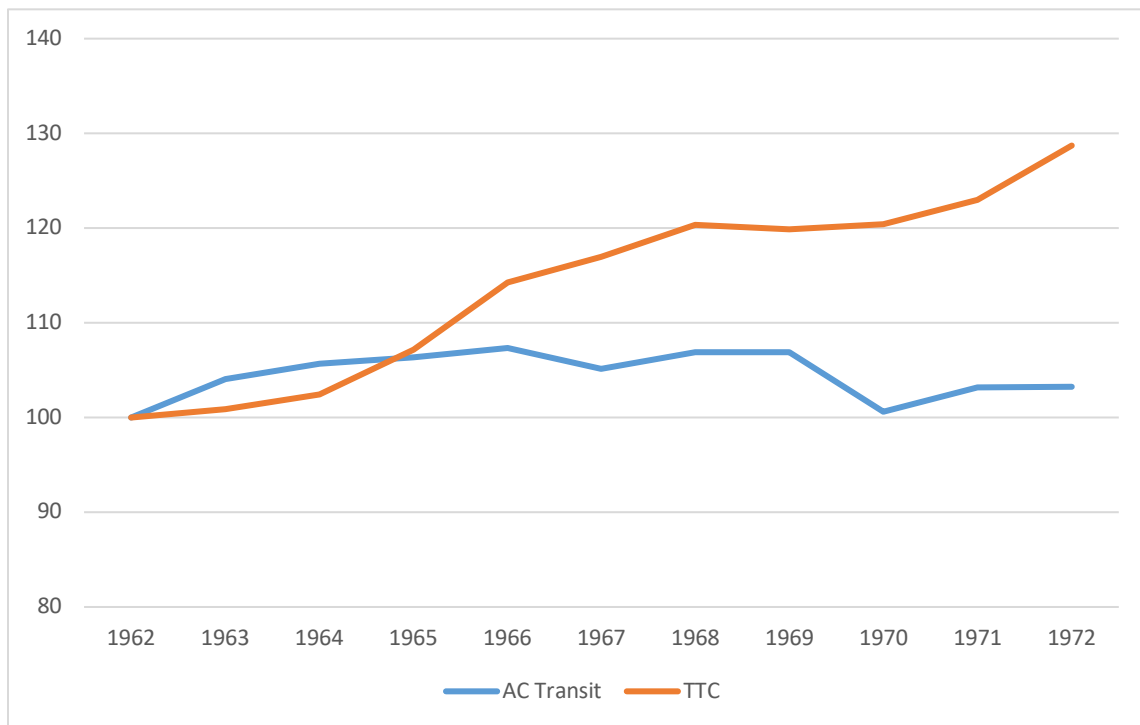


Figure 20: TTC vs AC Transit Ridership Change (1962=100)

Indeed, the Bay Area, to a significant degree, emulated the approach that Sewell and Solomon advocated for Toronto: focusing transit on the dense prewar city while

limiting ostensibly unremunerative local service in new suburbs. The City of San Francisco is similar in size to the prewar City of Toronto, and Muni, its local transit agency, is confined within the city limits. Muni has developed an extensive LRT network serving much of the city, including a streetcar subway in the city core, mirroring the old TTC plans for Queen Street. Its transit mode share to work is 33%, not too much lower than the 39.2% achieved by the TTC in Doucet and Doucet's "Streetcar City," which consists of the prewar parts of the City of Toronto.⁸⁹ In the rest of the region, however, transit ridership pales by comparison. The lower figure of 33% compared with prewar Toronto, despite the density and well-developed rail infrastructure of the City of San Francisco, can likely be attributed to transit's comparative unsuitability to trips outside the city limits unless the destination happens to be located within walking distance of a BART station. San Francisco residents, even if they have frequent transit service passing their home, effectively must have a car if they need to make regular trips to the vast majority of the urban area that is outside the city limits.

The construction of the 71.5-mile BART system in only a decade is an astounding administrative and engineering achievement. However, it has failed to live up to its full potential because, unlike the TTC subway, it was built into an area that had far more limited local transit service. That is why BART, as of 2008, moved only 2,192 daily riders per kilometre, while the Toronto subway and RT moved 16,800 per kilometre.⁹⁰

In Toronto, a very large proportion of riders at suburban stations arrive by connecting surface transit, because it is both fast and frequent. As Paul Mees has

⁸⁹ Freemark, "Travel Mode Shares in the U.S."

⁹⁰ English, "Three Approaches to Suburban Transit: Washington, San Francisco Bay, and Toronto."

described, the frequency of service enables riders to make connections easily between modes, and therefore to extend the catchment area of rail transit stations. TTC riders reach the subway from many kilometres away by bus, which means that station access is not limited either by the walking distance radius of the station or by the availability of parking in park-and-ride lots. Because both Metro and BART operate far more limited bus service in suburban areas, the number of riders using the bus to access the station is also far more limited. At suburban BART stations, like Walnut Creek and Fremont, over 85% of riders reached the station by car. Even in Glen Park, a station located in a relatively urban part of Berkeley, around half of riders drove to the station, 37% walked, and only 8% rode the bus. Only in central San Francisco did 60% of riders get to and from the station on foot.⁹¹ By contrast, Toronto's suburban stations have comparatively minimal parking, though they handle far more riders than suburban Metro or BART stations even when their transit-oriented development is limited. This is because most of their riders arrive by connecting bus.

The higher ridership per kilometre of Metro, in comparison with BART, can largely be explained by its superior approach to transit-oriented development. Cervero is entirely correct that the Bay Area did a poor job of implementing transit-oriented development at its stations, for various reasons including a lack of regional planning and neighbourhood opposition. Instead, it has emphasized park-and-ride as the key means of access to its stations. As of 2014, BART had a total of 46,385 parking spaces spread across 33 of its 44 stations, an average of 1,405 per station with parking.⁹² Washington Metro has even

⁹¹ Cervero, "Rail Access Modes and Catchment Areas for the BART System," 2.

⁹² "BART 2014 Factsheet" (Oakland: San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, January 14, 2014), https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2014BARTFactsheet_Final%20011614.pdf.

more: 61,721 at 44 of its 91 stations.⁹³ Toronto transportation planners in the 1960s and 70s also emphasized the importance of park-and-ride. Metro’s transportation plans consistently discussed the need for ample parking at subway stations. In 1963, for example, TTC planners went on a trip to Cleveland and Chicago to study the parking facilities at their outer terminal stations. They were impressed by Chicago’s plans for 6,000-space parking garages at outlying subway stations, and strongly suggested use of tax money to pay for free subway station parking.⁹⁴ Despite the talk, however, the TTC never implemented park-and-ride facilities on the scale of BART and WMATA (or, for that matter, GO Transit in the outlying suburbs of Toronto). Even after the recent subway extension to Vaughan, which added significant parking capacity, the TTC still only has parking at 17 of its 75 stations, with a total of 13,737 spaces (808 per station with parking). The problem for the park-and-ride approach to suburban transit is that even the largest parking lots cannot come close to meeting the capacity of a subway system.

A comparison of typical suburban stations on the three systems illustrates the point. Toronto’s York Mills station, for example, is in nearly the least clement environment for a rapid transit station imaginable—surrounded as it is by parking lots, a golf course, and estate homes—but it nevertheless handles an average of 27,260 riders per day in 2010. El Cerrito del Norte, a typical BART station in the East Bay with similarly limited transit-oriented development, accommodated only 7,633 passengers per day. The reason is because only 2,198 cars can be accommodated in El Cerrito del Norte’s vast parking garages, while the capacity of the TTC’s buses to bring riders to York Mills is

⁹³ “WMATA Parking Facility Usage” (Washington, D.C: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, June 2015), <https://ggwash.org/files/2015-metroparking.pdf>.

⁹⁴ R.M. Topp, “Study Trip Re Park-n-Ride Chicago and Cleveland” (Toronto Transit Commission, November 5, 1963), Box 630959, City of Toronto Archives.

greatly higher. The 95 York Mills bus route, one of three full-service routes connecting to the station, carried 27,500 passengers per day in 2014, of which a large proportion boarded or alighted at the station. It is evidently the principal means of access to the station. Even an inconceivably large park-and-ride lot would not come close to accommodating the ridership of even that single station, which is far from the busiest in suburban Toronto. The parking lot of the West Edmonton Mall, with 20,000 spots, is noted in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest in the world.⁹⁵ Finch Station, for example, accommodated 99,350 passengers on an average day in 2018.⁹⁶

York Mills station is served by bus routes running both east and west on the main arterial road (York Mills Road to the east and Wilson Avenue to the west) intersecting with Yonge Street at the station. The buses in both directions run twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, and until 1:30am, they run at least every 10 minutes. There is an additional route serving a local high-income subdivision of single-family homes, and even that route runs half-hourly until 1am. El Cerrito del Norte, by contrast, is served by two AC Transit routes. One route operates half-hourly all day, but service stops at about 8:30pm, even on weekdays, and the last outbound trip from the station leaves at 6:25pm on weekends. A late work day could cause a rider to miss the last trip on a weekday; on weekends, transit is completely useless for a trip for dinner. Even the busier route, which connects the station to Contra Costa College, only operates about every half hour for most of the day.

⁹⁵ “Largest Car Park,” Guinness World Records, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-car-park/>.

⁹⁶ English, “Three Approaches to Suburban Transit: Washington, San Francisco Bay, and Toronto”; “Subway Ridership - 2018” (Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.), 2016, https://www.ttc.ca/PDF/Transit_Planning/Subway%20ridership%20-%202018.pdf.

Reliance on park-and-ride also greatly diminishes the environmental benefits of public transit. According to a 2017 study, over 75% of combined VOC pollutants from automobiles are emitted during the first three minutes after a car is started after it has been left off for more than 12 hours. Even a short drive to the transit station can result in significant pollution, especially in a cold climate.⁹⁷

A better approach than park-and-ride for developing ridership at suburban subway stations is transit-oriented development, as scholars like Robert Cervero and Michael Bernick have long advocated, and for which Greater Washington is a model.⁹⁸ While many writers, including Cervero⁹⁹, have portrayed Toronto as a model of transit-oriented development, and the city has been making efforts to live up to that billing in recent years, the environs of many suburban TTC subway stations are quite similar to those of many American suburban rapid transit stations. Along the Yonge line, rezoning led to the development of apartment and office building clusters around stations in midtown Toronto. On newer segments, however, zoning policies, land ownership, and market circumstances have led to a situation where many stations are surrounded by parkland, parking lots, and strip malls despite recent strides to attract more high-density development.

The Greater Washington region has, if anything, significantly surpassed Toronto in the realm of transit-oriented development, especially in Arlington County, Virginia and

⁹⁷ Randal S. Martin, Clay Woods, and Joe Thomas, “Assessment of Automobile Start and Idling Emissions under Utah Specific Conditions: Cold Start, Hot Start, and Idle Emissions as Measured on Northern Utah Vehicles,” Project Final Report, May 2017, https://apps.weber.edu/wsuiimages/ncast/projects/Cold_Hot_Start_Idle_Emissions_Final_Report.pdf; “DEQ and Universities Examine Starting Vehicles ‘Cold,’” Weber State University, January 6, 2016, https://www.weber.edu/WSUToday/010616_AirEmissions.html.

⁹⁸ Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21st Century*.

⁹⁹ Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis*, 87–88.

Montgomery County, Maryland. Through pro-active planning policy, those counties were able to generate considerable mixed-use development around a number of suburban Metro stations. Despite well-organized community opposition, the farsighted planners and county leaders zoned the area around a number of suburban Metro stations for high density, urban-style development, and private developers gradually brought the plans to fruition. They were aided by the federal government, by far the area's largest employer, which actively sought to locate its offices at Metro stations. Though the development areas were little more than villages, farm fields, or automobile-oriented shopping malls in the 1950s, a person walking around Silver Spring, Bethesda, or Ballston today would feel that they were in the distinctly vibrant downtown of a mid-size city. With the partial exception of North York Centre—the planned downtown of the former City of North York, which includes many new condominium developments—Toronto largely lacks the walkable, mixed-use suburban communities that are spread around suburban Washington. Yet the ridership at Toronto's suburban subway stations—even those with poor transit-oriented development—is consistently higher.¹⁰⁰

Take Bethesda, for example, which Schrag describes as Montgomery County's "showpiece" of transit-oriented development. While it is undeniably successful and a significant proportion of its workers and residents use transit, its 19,062 riders per day¹⁰¹ is still considerably lower than York Mills' 27,500, though the latter's transit-oriented development is dismal by comparison. Many other suburban Toronto stations, including those with equally limited transit-oriented development, are even busier.

¹⁰⁰ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 222–33.

¹⁰¹ Figures are averaged from 2015 to 2019, doubled to produce a comparable figure to TTC boardings and alightings. "Metrorail Average Weekday Passenger Boardings."



Figure 21: Bethesda Metro Station Environs¹⁰²

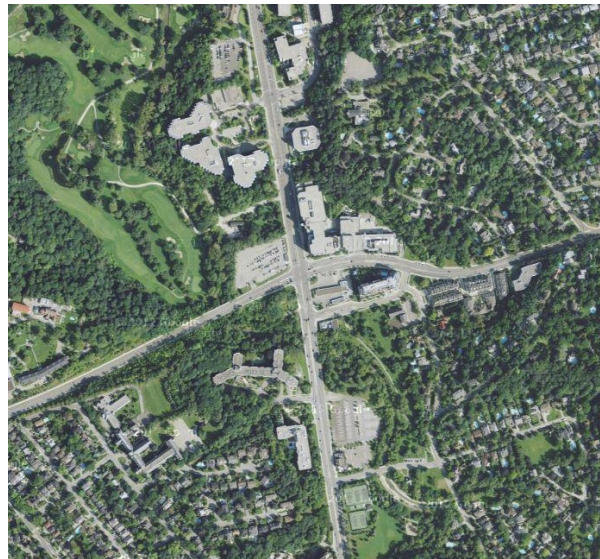


Figure 22: York Mills Subway Station Environs¹⁰³

This is not to say that transit-oriented development is not a highly desirable goal. It will, however, never be possible to build rapid transit within walking distance of all or even most residents of a major metropolitan area. This is especially true given the existing

¹⁰² Image Source: Google Earth.

¹⁰³ Image Source: Google Earth.

low-density built form of much of suburban North America. No matter how many condominium towers or office buildings are built around stations, this will continue to be the case. It is therefore necessary to find means by which residents beyond walking and cycling distance can access stations. There are only two means by which this is possible: park-and-ride, or connecting bus. As we have seen, park-and-ride has significant limitations, both in terms of its practical capacity and its environmental effects. But feeder buses are only useful if they are frequent enough that a missed transfer does not create serious hardship.

The comparison of Toronto, Greater Washington, and the Bay Area makes clear that the key to maximizing the value of rail infrastructure investment is to embed it within a network of frequent local service. Park-and-ride lots or adjacent development will never be sufficient to fill a high-capacity rail service, and it is impossible to build a rail transit network that is in walking distance of all, or even a significant proportion, of a region's residents. The only way to make transit useful for most of a region's population is to emulate the Toronto model: provide seamless, fare-integrated transfers at rail stations to a local bus service that runs frequently enough to minimize the problems caused by a missed connection.

Too often, American regions—and, increasingly, Ontario—have put the cart before the horse, spending large sums on major capital projects intended to attract people to transit (as well as to encourage real estate development)¹⁰⁴ that are built into a wasteland of local transit service. Governments build LRT routes in areas where buses run once an hour, or where the last trip of the night runs at 7pm. It is therefore entirely unsurprising

¹⁰⁴ King and Fischer, "Streetcar Projects as Spatial Planning."

that many American LRT systems, costing billions to build in many cases, carry fewer riders than some suburban Toronto local bus routes.¹⁰⁵ The availability of federal capital funding has facilitated large investments in transit infrastructure for decades, but federal operating funding has been largely eliminated. This policy has produced a backwards approach to transit, in which basic local service is starved for funds while billion-dollar megaprojects are built across the country. In city after city, large and expensive light rail networks are useful only to a tiny proportion of the region's population, since the buses that connect to them run far too infrequently for connecting trips to be viable. Lack of integration compounds the problem—in some cases, rail and bus service are not even on the same fare structure. Some agencies, like the Detroit Department of Transportation, even run bus routes that parallel rail service, with ridership often segregated by race and class.¹⁰⁶

Despite massive investments in infrastructure in several American regions, including Greater Washington and the San Francisco Bay Area, transit never fully achieved its promise of liberating residents from the need to rely on the automobile. Though there may have been many miles of new rapid transit, most people in the region still needed to drive to reach the station. As Schaeffer and Sclar have stated, this reliance on the automobile, while it has enhanced mobility for many, has actually hindered access to the opportunities available in their city for the substantial proportion of the population that are unable to drive. The American transit planners, despite their seeming ambition

¹⁰⁵ See Epilogue for further detail.

¹⁰⁶ Kate Grengs and Joe Lowe, "Private Donations for Public Transit: The Equity Implications of Detroit's Public-Private Streetcar," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, March 13, 2018, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0739456X18761237>. Conversations with author, Neil Greenberg, former Manager of Service Development and Scheduling, Detroit Department of Transportation.

in pursuing vast projects like BART and Metro, remained mired in the path dependence of automobility. The TTC, by contrast, had struck off on a new path before automobility was fully entrenched.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Schaeffer and Sclar, *Access for All*; Sclar, Lönnroth, and Wolmar, *Urban Access for the 21st Century*, 11–18.

Chapter 8: The New Suburban Majority

The subway finally pushed beyond the boundaries of the City of Toronto in 1968, as French students hurled paving stones at the police and Trudeaumania gripped normally conservative Toronto. A staid crowd, with men still wearing hats, celebrated as twin extensions on the eastern and western ends of the Bloor-Danforth subway to Warden in Scarborough and Islington in Etobicoke opened on May 10th of that year. They watched Scarborough Mayor Albert Campbell and Etobicoke Mayor Edward Horton as the magistrates exultantly drove the first trains on their boroughs' respective extensions—Horton hyperbolized that the day would be remembered “in song and verse.”¹

The projects had been approved in 1964, immediately after Metro assumed much of the TTC's existing subway-related debt and increased its share of the Bloor-Danforth costs. They were expected to add \$77 million to the original budget, bringing the total cost of the subway project to \$280 million. The OMB approved the borrowing despite an appeal by Goodhead, who was concerned about the project's effects on capital spending for other projects in North York, and who was no doubt unhappy that the first suburban subway extensions would go to the second- and third-most-populous boroughs rather than to his own.² The extensions were supported by both the Planning Board and the TTC, in both cases partly to solidify suburban political support for transit. "We took the position that subways serve a political purpose," Eli Comay said in a 1982 interview with Frances Frisken.³

¹ Douglas Sagi, “Subway Rolls to the Suburbs: Day Will Live ‘in Song, Verse,’ Horton Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 11, 1968.

² “Appeal Fails: OMB Approves Transit Extension,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 4, 1964.

³ Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 34.



Figure 23: Bloor-Danforth Etobicoke Extension Opening, May 10, 1968.⁴

The gambit was successful. In addition to the enhanced Metro support for funding the TTC's capital expenses, the Province agreed, for the first time, to directly subsidize as well. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Metro, aided by the backroom lobbying of Gardiner and Frost, was able to persuade the province to fund one third of the roadbed of the new Bloor-Danforth subway line through its highway funding program, beginning in 1964.⁵ The roadbed, meaning the tunnels and rights-of-way as opposed to the stations, tracks, and vehicles, was deemed to be equivalent to a highway; there was an established funding formula by which highways received one-third funding. The province also agreed to purchase Metro's debentures, so that the municipality could borrow at a much lower rate. Even the Federal government, rarely involved in directly funding municipal projects, approved a \$29.5 million low-interest loan for the project, with 25% of that amount

⁴ City of Toronto Archives.

⁵ "Financing of Public Transit in Toronto," 4.

convertible into a grant.⁶ The financial support for transit from upper levels of government would never have been achieved if its sole political constituency was the City of Toronto, which was declining in relative political importance with every year of meteoric suburban growth.

By the late 1960s, the TTC had built a strong political constituency throughout Metro, including many suburban politicians and the powerful real estate industry. The latter had been a key driver of the meteoric expansion of the New York City subway system in the early decades of the 20th century. Private transit companies built new subway and elevated lines into empty fields, and waves of apartment houses soon spread outward from their stations—many of them built by associates of the transit companies’ owners. After the Second World War, however, subway expansion plans remained limited to the already densely developed five boroughs—many projects duplicating existing elevated lines that were slated for demolition—while most new development was occurring in the counties beyond the city limits. As a result, real estate interests—once the most enthusiastic supporters of subway construction—began to oppose subway expansion due to the upward pressure its cost placed on real estate taxation.⁷

In Toronto, the position of the real estate industry was very different. As the areas around new subway stations were re-zoned for high density, developers quickly profited by replacing houses with new office and apartment towers. Suburban developers equally benefited from new extensions, which served the fastest-growing parts of Metro both directly and through connecting buses.

⁶ “Loan of \$29,482,000 For Subway Extension Approved by Ottawa,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 6, 1964, 29.

⁷ Hood, *722 Miles*, 243–44.

G. Warren Heenan, a real estate industry executive and past president of the Toronto Real Estate Board, was emblematic as he toured the North American conference circuit extolling the virtues of subway construction. “Balanced transportation, featuring Rapid Transit as the main component, is the key to phenomenal urban growth,” he told the 1,200 delegates of the 1969 annual meeting of the American Transit Association in Montreal. This was because automobile congestion was “strangling the growth of many of North America’s great cities.” He considered an ongoing operating subsidy for transit to be “good business,” and went so far as to declare that transit should be as free as highways. This enthusiastic support is unsurprising, considering his claim that the Yonge subway sparked \$10 billion in development—of a total \$15 billion in development over the preceding year metro-wide. “Properties along the subway route doubled and tripled and sometimes increased as much as tenfold in value,” Heenan boasted.⁸ The TTC occasionally pursued air-rights development over its cut-and-cover subway lines and stations—going so far as to produce a glossy brochure outlining the opportunities for developers—but they never pursued the type of systematic value capture through development that became a significant revenue source in places like Hong Kong.⁹

⁸ G. Warren Heenan, “Realty Values and Rapid Transit” (88th Annual Meeting of the American Transit Association, Montreal, 1969).

⁹ “Building Rights over Subway Sites: Bloor-Danforth Subway Extensions (Prestige Locations in Metro)” (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, n.d.), Series 11, File 615, City of Toronto Archives; Robert Cervero and Jin Murakami, “Rail and Property Development in Hong Kong: Experiences and Extensions,” *Urban Studies* 46, no. 10 (September 1, 2009): 2019–43; Lin Li, Chao He Rong, and Hong Feng Zhu, “Suggestions on Comprehensive Metro and Real Estate Development Applied in China: A Case Study of the MTR,” *Applied Mechanics and Materials* 587–589 (2014): 2014–17; Deborah Salon, Elliott Sclar, and Richard Barone, “Can Location Value Capture Pay for Transit? Organizational Challenges of Transforming Theory into Practice,” *Urban Affairs Review* 55, no. 3 (May 1, 2019): 743–71; Robert Cervero, Peter Hall, and John Landis, “Transit Joint Development in the United States,” December 1, 1990, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/07t5930g>.

The twin subway extensions and improvements to connecting buses resulted in a 7.7% increase in subway ridership in 1968 over the previous year.¹⁰ Among the key goals of the extension were, as the 1964 Transportation Plan put it, to bring the subway to suburban locations with space for facilities for numerous feeder buses and for ample commuter parking.¹¹ Indeed, the terminals were equipped with lavish bus terminals, with waiting areas complete with shops above platforms, and flashing signs indicating when a bus was ready for boarding. The bus routes flooding into the new terminals had already been operating for years—many since 1963—and they provided a strong established base of ridership for the new subway. Sixteen of the existing routes were re-designed to connect with the subway, and twelve new routes were started. It meant another 2.9 million vehicle-miles of suburban service added in 1968.¹²

Instead of pacifying suburban demands for flat fares, however, the subway extension only heightened them by highlighting the arbitrariness of the fare boundary. The new subway segments outside the City of Toronto passed through Zone 2, but the subway fare collection technology remained token-based. This meant that the new subway was considered to be part of Zone 1, but all of the connecting surface routes remained in Zone 2. While, as Chair Allen privately noted, this “eliminated resentment” among subway passengers who would otherwise be forced to pay a second fare to ride 1 or 2 extra stations, and would encourage use of park and ride lots at the new suburban stations, it forced riders transferring between bus and subway—one of the key strengths

¹⁰ “1968 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto” (Toronto Transit Commission, 1968).

¹¹ “Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan,” 60–61.

¹² “1968 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

of the TTC system—to pay a punitive double fare.¹³ Unsurprisingly, the arrangement suppressed ridership. Simpson and Ong—long sceptical of a single fare—nevertheless projected that while a single fare would cost \$3,344,000 in lost revenues in the first year, it would win more than 2,000,000 additional passengers.¹⁴

Though some consideration was given to the use of magnetic stripe card technology, which would track riders as they entered and left the system to enable fare-by-distance, as was being planned for the San Francisco BART system at that time, implementation was dismissed as impractical. That was not least because the close integration between bus and subway—not present in the Bay Area—would require a much more complex electronic fare collection system that incorporated buses and streetcars as well. In London, a second operator on buses was required to handle fare collection for their fare-by-distance system.¹⁵

Throughout the 1960s, suburban Metro councillors continued to relentlessly pressure the TTC to eliminate the zone fare system. In 1964, New Toronto passed a resolution calling on the TTC to introduce a single fare system, given the contribution of all Metro municipalities to paying for subway construction.¹⁶ Controller Irv Paisley of North York wrote in his newsletter that “The citizens of North York are a long-suffering lot when it comes to transportation,” lamenting that they were afflicted with a levy “to provide a subway for downtown residents, which doesn’t even reach [their] own

¹³ William R. Allen, “Notes,” 1966, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

¹⁴ “An Unfair Load.”

¹⁵ J.H. Kearns, “Memorandum on Public Transit Fares,” September 27, 1965, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive; P. Pickett, “Report to the Members of the Transportation Committee,” September 8, 1967, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive; William R. Allen to E. Meyers, April 21, 1969, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archives.

¹⁶ Councillor G.M. Baycroft, “Resolution No. 25” (1964).

community,” and were subsidizing the TTC “by being forced to pay a double fair [sic]” to go downtown. This “barrier” at Lawrence Avenue was “an expensive menace,” he argued, “for it acts as a psychological shield to prevent Metro’s rich and flourishing ‘northern half’ from visiting the downtown areas of culture, business and entertainment.¹⁷

They were reflecting the views of their constituents. The Oak-Vaughan Ratepayers Association in the Borough of York, for example, wrote to York Mayor Jack Mould—the borough’s representative on the Metro Executive—to inform him of their own resolution calling for a uniform flat fare, at least within the area directly served by the subway. In their letter, they described the situation as “ridiculous” since some people travelling a relatively short distance within their borough were forced to pay a double fare if they had to transfer between bus and subway, while riders could travel right across the City of Toronto on a single fare.¹⁸

The suburbanites had the support of the powerful *Star*, which wrote in a March 1963 editorial that “The case for a single fare grows morally and politically stronger as Metro gets more deeply involved in TTC financing,” particularly the new subway projects. “Suburban as well as city taxpayers provide these funds. The suburbs see a single fare as their just reward.”¹⁹ Increasingly, flat fares were justified as a means of getting people out of their cars—marking a key shift in justification for transit from an end in itself to a means of road congestion relief and even environmental improvement.

¹⁷ “Newsletter of Controller Irv Paisley,” 1965, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

¹⁸ E.S. Ryan, “Letter to Mayor Jack Mould from Oak-Vaughan Ratepayers’ Association,” October 23, 1968, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archives.

¹⁹ “An Unfair Load.”

The suburban bloc was irate as much at the perceived unfairness as at the actual cost for their constituents. The problem for the suburbanites was that if the TTC were to remain self-sustaining, a Metro-wide flat fare would have to be financed by a fare increase on single-zone riders—mostly those in the old City of Toronto. As of 1964, that would mean a fare increase on 88% of riders to pay for a fare reduction on only 12% of riders—a politically dubious proposition if there ever was one. A different solution for financing would need to be found.²⁰

Metro Council repeatedly voted to urge the Executive Committee and the TTC to unify the fare system. On August 5, 1965, Metro Council amended a report to request that the Executive Committee recommend the inclusion of a single fare in the 1966 budget estimates.²¹ The Executive Committee demurred, but again in 1967, the Borough of York pressed the Executive Committee to adopt a single fare.²² Members of the Metro Transportation Committee met with the TTC commissioners in September of that year, where the TTC still argued that a single fare was impossible given that the commission was expected to operate on a self-sustaining basis.²³

The implication was that if the TTC were to eliminate zone fares, the cost would need to be covered by the government and the “self-sustaining” mantra would need to be ended once and for all. This remained contentious within the TTC, where independence from council remained paramount to many officials.²⁴ The Commission had thus far

²⁰ H.E. Pettett General Secretary, TTC to W.W. Gardhouse, Metropolitan Clerk, February 19, 1964, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

²¹ William R. Allen to Ralph Day, Chairman, Toronto Transit Commission, September 10, 1965.

²² “TTC Single Fare Zone,” n.d., Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

²³ Pickett, “Report to the Members of the Transportation Committee.”

²⁴ “Inglis’ Report: Single Fare Too Costly, TTC Official Says,” *Toronto Daily Star*, January 4, 1966.

managed to have it both ways by limiting sustained subsidy to capital expenses and retaining full independence in the operating budget. Though they had dangled the possibility of flat fares in exchange for Metro's assumption of all capital costs, the prospect of full abolition of the fare zones was not welcomed by the TTC.²⁵ Assistant General Manager for Operations J.H. Kearns argued that it is inequitable to charge a single fare in a large city, as riders travelling a short distance would pay the same amount as riders travelling a very long distance. He recognized that it was equally inequitable to force riders to pay a double fare when they cross an arbitrary zone boundary, but instead favoured a fare-by-distance system, ideally using new fare collection technology.²⁶ The TTC's management was fighting against an inexorably rising political tide.

Outside the TTC's staff, it was increasingly seen as inevitable that the fare system would be unified. C.C. Downey, a TTC commissioner and prominent Toronto lawyer, wrote confidentially to Metro Chairman Allen saying that he was "of course in favour of a 'single fare' if the loss in revenue can be financed—and I think it should be by the taxpayer—for this public service."²⁷

Downey even contacted officials in Winnipeg, a city that also had a metropolitan government and that had abolished transit zone fares. Winnipeg's Commissioner of Streets and Transit replied that he had been opposed to a single fare while their transit system was supposed to be self-supporting, but that his opposition evaporated when Metro Council indicated that they would fund the policy change rather than financing it

²⁵ Alden Baker, "TTC Holds Out Single Fare As Bait for Subway Help," *The Globe and Mail*, June 8, 1963.

²⁶ Kearns, "Memorandum on Public Transit Fares."

²⁷ Downey to Allen, September 21, 1965.

through a fare increase. Furthermore, he noted that the cost of the change was less than expected, and that increased ridership made up, in part, for the lower overall fare.²⁸

Allen, though publicly supportive, remained hesitant. He wrote privately to Controller Paisley to remark that “the dilemma posed by a single fare zone structure remains in that the realty taxpayer is called upon to compensate for the savings enjoyed by the public transportation user.”²⁹

The suburban councillors were further empowered following a large-scale re-organization of Metro in response to the Goldenberg Report, which was released in 1965.³⁰ The TTC cannot have been displeased with its recommendation that the TTC not be abolished and its functions transferred to a Metro department, owing to “its record of efficient administration.” Nevertheless, Goldenberg recommended that there be more formal coordination between Metro and the TTC, including an *ex officio* seat for the Metro chair on the commission, and in particular between the TTC and the Planning Board.³¹

More consternation at the TTC came from the province’s response in 1966 to the report’s recommendations on restructuring Metro and Metro Council. Gardiner had urged the retention of voting parity on Metro Council between Toronto and the suburbs.³² Goldenberg recommended merging the 13 municipalities into four, maintaining the City at close to half the Metro population by merging York and East York with Toronto, but the province balked, instead opting for six municipalities. This meant that the City of

²⁸ D.I. MacDonald to C.C. Downey, Q.C., December 7, 1964, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

²⁹ William R. Allen to Irv Paisley, September 1, 1965, Series 11, File 603, City of Toronto Archive.

³⁰ Goldenberg, “Report of The Royal Commission on Metropolitan Toronto.”

³¹ Goldenberg, 46.

³² Frederick G. Gardiner, “Submission to the Commission Appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council of the Province of Ontario to Inquire into the Affairs of the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto,” June 15, 1957, City of Toronto Archives.

Toronto would comprise only a minority of Metro's population (682,000 of 1,747,000 in 1967), and the restructured Metro Council reflected the demographics. The new Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Act, passed in 1967, established a decisive suburban majority of 20 seats on Metro Council to the City's 12. The chair— invariably a suburbanite after Allen retired in 1969 and was replaced by Scarborough Mayor Albert Campbell—made up the final vote. The change recognized the increasing suburban majority in the population. Though the executive committee remained evenly divided between city and suburbs for the moment, a unified suburban bloc would inevitably prevail on Metro Council in any dispute.

More fundamentally, however, the role of the City of Toronto within the Metro federation had changed. The wealth of the City in the early years had financed the enormous infrastructure needs of the rapidly developing suburban boroughs. By the late 1960s, however, the situation had reversed: the suburbs were now populous and wealthy, while the City's aging physical infrastructure was in serious need of repair and it retained a disproportionate burden of social services.³³ The suburbanites increasingly held the upper hand demographically, politically, and economically within Metro. The TTC's reluctant assent to suburban service expansion, and the success of the expansion program, came just in time. Despite TTC staff's fears, it is likely that the expansion saved, rather than destroyed the TTC's independence for many more years.

It is therefore unsurprising that when the suburban subway extensions opened a year after Metro Council was reformed, the TTC supported them with another enormous expansion of suburban bus service. Miles of suburban passenger service provided

³³ Rose, *Governing Metropolitan Toronto*, 177–84.

increased in 1968 by 2.86 million (12.6%) to 19.82 million. As with earlier expansions, riders quickly flocked to the new services: annual suburban ridership increased by 5.4 million (7.4%) to a total of 78.7 million. The commission's financial state, however, was not so favourable as it slipped into a deficit of \$1.2 million, owing partly to the cost of the new services, which did not perform quite as well financially in their early days as the extraordinarily successful previous round of expansion.

The TTC attributed most of the increase in expenses, however, to an increase in its labour costs. The Commission closely averted a strike by agreeing to "the highest wage and fringe benefit settlement in Commission history," though it noted that the increase was in line with other settlements in the city, amid a booming economy and growing inflation.³⁴ Since the TTC had consistently rejected operating subsidy, it responded, still claiming the need for self-sustaining operation, with a substantial increase in the basic one-zone fare from 20 to 25 cents. The upshot in the following year was the first annual ridership decline—of 0.4%—since the suburban expansion in 1962.³⁵

The fare increase was announced only a few days before its imposition, ostensibly to prevent hoarding of tokens, highlighting the absence of political accountability at the TTC.³⁶ Frustration with the TTC was widely aired during that fall's municipal election campaign.³⁷ In response to the fare hike, Metro Councillors agitated for and ultimately agreed to subsidize a half-fare arrangement for low-income seniors, over persistent

³⁴ "1968 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto"; "New Routes a Factor in TTC Deficit," *The Globe and Mail*, January 22, 1969.

³⁵ "1969 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto" (Toronto Transit Commission, 1969).

³⁶ "Short Notice of TTC Fare Rise Is Bid to Stop 'Chiselling', Day Says," *The Globe and Mail*, February 7, 1969.

³⁷ "TTC Wants to Counter Election 'Half-Truths,'" *The Globe and Mail*, December 10, 1969.

obstruction by the TTC.³⁸ On May 5, 1970, Metro Council voted 13-10 to ask the province for permission to upgrade the chair of the Metro Transportation Committee from a non-voting to a voting member of the TTC. The dispute did not divide on traditional city-suburban lines. The move was proposed by North York Controller Irving Paisley, and was supported by several City members like Tony O'Donohue, who viewed the all-appointed commission as an “undemocratic” way for Metro Council to place a buffer between itself and the citizenry. The *Globe and Mail's* editorial writers agreed, criticizing the TTC's reluctance to meet with community groups and the press. Metro Chairman Campbell of Scarborough was opposed, as were Toronto Mayor William Dennison and North York Controller Mel Lastman—a flamboyant furniture dealer who was later North York's long-time mayor and then the first mayor of the new City of Toronto following Metro's amalgamation into a single city in 1998—who “believed the TTC is administering the utility on a businesslike basis and to appoint politicians to it would destroy this.”³⁹

The province went even further than asked, empowering Metro Council to appoint as many of its own members as it liked, and shortening the TTC commissioners' terms from three years to one.⁴⁰ Darcy McKeough, the provincial minister of municipal affairs and housing, explained in the legislature that it would be “Metro's decision” whether it wanted to abolish the TTC's independence. Though independent public authorities remained in vogue elsewhere—New York State had created the Metropolitan

³⁸ “Reduced Fares for Elderly given Assent,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 3, 1969; “1970 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

³⁹ “Council Backs Naming Member to the TTC,” *The Globe and Mail*, May 6, 1970; “No Elected Officials for Transit Board, Metro Executive Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 3, 1971; “A Responsible TTC,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1970; “To Keep the TTC Pure,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 19, 1971.

⁴⁰ James MacKenzie, “Provincial Moves Would Put Metro Politicians in Charge of Running TTC,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1970.

Transportation Authority a few years earlier—the Ontario government was less enthralled with the concept, at least in the case of the TTC. It was the government’s “general philosophy,” McKeough explained, that agencies like the TTC should be run “politically.”⁴¹ Campbell was nevertheless able to prevent Metro Council from taking up the provincial offer, and they opted to follow their original plan of appointing a single council member.⁴²

It is clear that the success of the 1963 expansion firmly established the idea that suburban transit expansion could be successful, and equally that Metro Council would need to embrace at least modest subsidy to make it happen. The TTC was promoting its ridership success as a result of service improvements, and the *Toronto Star* was beating the drum for the need to extend service to the suburbs to ensure that they did not develop entirely around the automobile. Clearly inspired by the success of the recent improvements, the 1964 Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan noted “the decisive importance of surface transit in the system.” Even in the plan’s scenarios with a very extensive subway system of almost 90 miles, passenger-miles on the surface transit network exceeded those on subways, and in most other scenarios they exceeded by over 50%. It also noted that the “frequent and extended surface transit service” included in the plan “is likely to require operating subsidies, and this is one of the main conclusions implicit in the recommended transportation plan.”⁴³

However, surface transit remained only a marginal element of the report, and of the transit debate as a whole. Most of the study was dedicated to large capital

⁴¹ “McKeough Says Metro Should Control TTC,” *Toronto Daily Star*, November 10, 1970, sec. Metro News.

⁴² Frisken, “Public Transit and the Public Interest: An Empirical Evaluation of Two Administrative Models,” 41.

⁴³ “Report on the Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan,” 62.

improvements, like expressways and subways. Likewise, political discussion and media coverage centred on large-scale infrastructure expansion, with the surface transit system playing only a marginal role. The steady improvement of the suburban transit system would come largely as a result of political negotiations on Metro Council and the internal processes of the TTC that sought to balance service with growing suburban demand spurred by the initial service expansion.

Chapter 9: Navigating Through Troubled Waters

June 3, 1971 was a day immortalized in verse and song. As poet Dennis Lee wrote, “The people paused to touch the air/And breathe the green renewal there/As though the headline was a prayer/The day we stopped Spadina.”¹ It was a great day for activists in downtown Toronto’s Annex neighbourhood, a tree-lined district of beautiful old houses adjacent to the University of Toronto, populated with a bohemian assortment of residents befitting such a location. It was also a harbinger of a much bigger and broader urban reform movement that would soon take over the City of Toronto’s government. It was a movement that questioned the modernist approach favoured by Metro since its genesis—a movement that opposed sacrificing the historic neighbourhoods of the old city on the altar of progress.

The 1970s were a challenging time for the TTC—a time in which its expenses skyrocketed at the same time that it faced continuing pressures for more services and flat fares. With hindsight, it seems almost shocking that it did not descend into the spiral of rising costs, service cuts, and ridership declines that shattered American systems a decade earlier. Instead, the TTC benefited from a provincial government that was, more than any government before or, arguably, since, profoundly attached to progressive urban ideals. The decade began with the province’s cancellation of a destructive urban highway project—a tangible and symbolic change. As part of its new urban-minded philosophy, the province instead provided both operating and capital funding for transit. The anger among suburbanites at the highway cancellation was partly assuaged by the provincial

¹ Dennis Lee, *Heart Residence: Collected Poems 1967-2017* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2017), 121–22.

operating funding enabling the achievement of what they had long sought: the elimination of the double fare. The subsidies were extremely timely, arriving just as the world faced a deluge of inflation. It allowed the TTC to stabilize and, eventually, grow its service. Few of the capital projects featured in the ambitious comprehensive plans of the era came to fruition, but Toronto's transit ridership remained strong thanks to the stable operating funding sustaining a dependable and comprehensive local service across Metro.

The Annex was hardly the type of place one would expect to meekly accept a new expressway in a ditch cutting a swathe through the middle of their community. Perhaps its most famous homeowner was none other than Jane Jacobs, fresh from another successful highway revolt against the Lower Manhattan Expressway in her former home of Greenwich Village.² Activists David and Nadine Nowlan's manifesto against the project *The Bad Trip*—its title captured the counterculture spirit of the movement—sat on the coffee tables of the city's cultural elite. In its foreword, celebrated philosopher and media theorist Marshall McLuhan said "Toronto will commit suicide if it plunges the Spadina Expressway into its heart." He called Metro's planners "19th-century men with a naïve faith in an obsolete technology," and warned that "Their failure to learn from the mistakes of American cities will be ours too."³

² Jean Dory, "Clash of Urban Philosophies: Moses versus Jacobs," *Journal of Planning History* 17, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 20–41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513217691999>; Christopher Klemek, "From Political Outsider To Power Broker in Two 'Great American Cities': Jane Jacobs and the Fall of the Urban Renewal Order in New York and Toronto," *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 309–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144207308669>; Richard White, "Jane Jacobs and Toronto, 1968-1978," *Journal of Planning History* 10, no. 2 (May 1, 2011): 114–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513210396293>.

³ David M. Nowlan and Nadine Nowlan, *The Bad Trip: The Untold Story of the Spadina Expressway* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1970).

The battle had been going on for years.⁴ The expressway's approval was one of Gardiner's final victories as Metro Chair in 1962. A few years later, construction began on a northern section in North York, along with an enormous interchange at Highway 401. The next phase was further south, where the affected neighbourhoods were more established, better organized, and more densely populated. By 1969, the expressway was a key issue in the City of Toronto election, and while NDP-affiliated but increasingly conservative and expressway-sympathetic Mayor William Dennison was re-elected, a large number of incumbent councillors were defeated by new progressive "reformers."⁵ Many of them were academics and activists, and they were members of all three main political parties.

Toronto was changing, its culture increasingly enriched by a flood of new arrivals. There were Americans escaping the Vietnam War, immigrants arriving from around the world as a result of Prime Minister Lester Pearson's colour-blind immigration policy, and, after 1976, much of Montreal's Anglophone elite fleeing language laws and the threat of Quebec separation. Spadina had become a shibboleth that defined the two political tribes that would battle for dominance in Metropolitan Toronto: the urban, anti-development, anti-highway "reformers" concentrated in the City of Toronto, and the pro-business, pro-development, pro-highway faction that predominated in the suburbs.

⁴ "Time to Stop," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1969; Jane Jacobs, "A City Getting Hooked on the Expressway Drug," *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 1969; Barry Came, "Toronto and North York Groups: Liberals Still Divided over Spadina Expressway Policy," *The Globe and Mail*, November 10, 1969.

⁵ "'Explosive Situation': Public Fears Planning Change, Controller Says," *The Globe and Mail*, November 24, 1969.

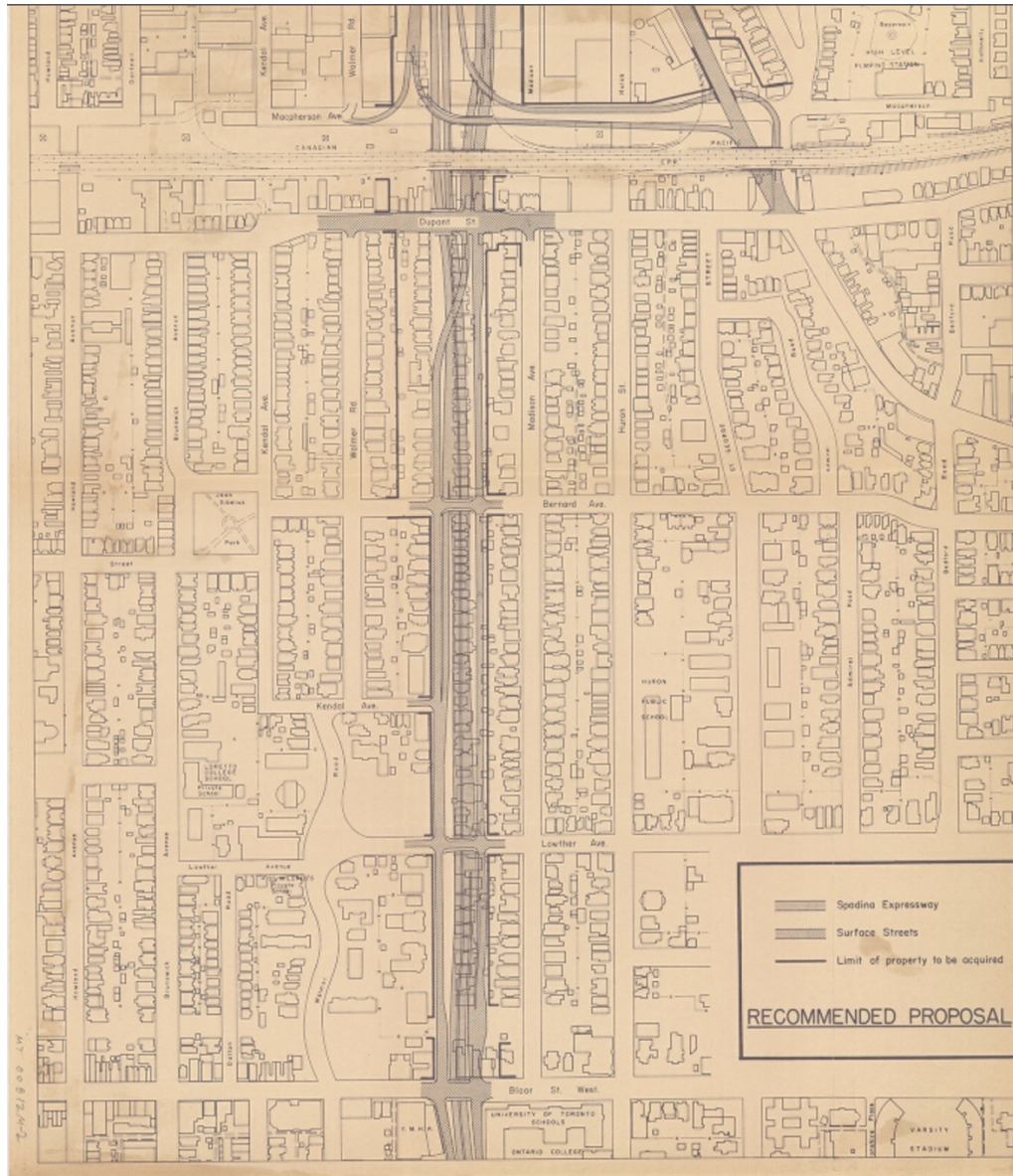


Figure 24: Spadina Expressway in the Annex⁶

Both descriptions were caricatures to some extent, and when the two factions battled over the TTC, their positions were complex and there was substantial common ground. While some suburban politicians opposed public spending on transit, others fought hard for transit subsidy so that their constituents could enjoy better service and a

⁶ *Recommended Proposal* (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, 1970), Fonds 200, Series 726, Item 152, City of Toronto Archives.

flat fare. The City crowd was strongly supportive of transit and wanted fares kept low, though many preferred spending to be concentrated in the denser prewar neighbourhoods rather than in newer areas. These were differences that could be bridged. With Spadina, however, the city-suburb divide deepened into a chasm as wide as the proposed expressway ditch.

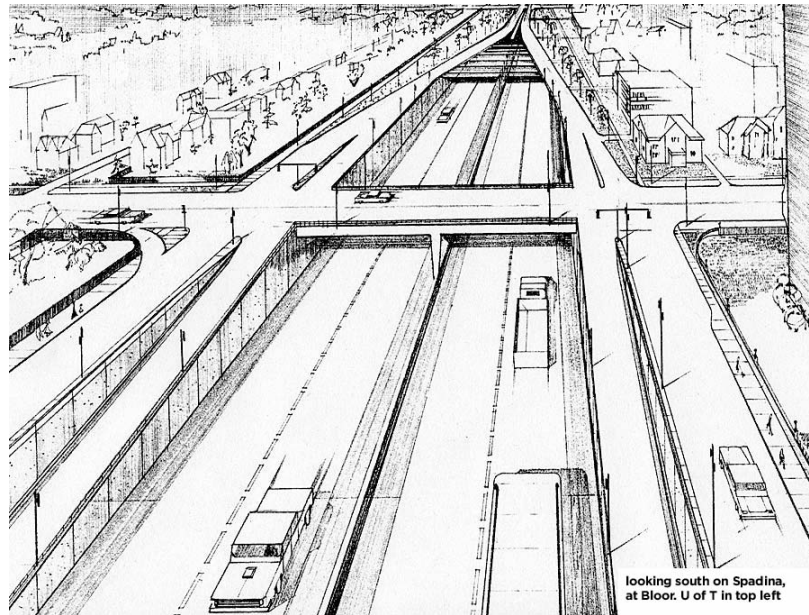


Figure 25: Spadina Expressway in the Annex⁷

Toronto's highway revolt was part of a growing movement across North America and Europe that rejected the physical destruction and cultural decay associated with rebuilding the city for the automobile.⁸ Affluent residents of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. had forced the quiet shelving of an expressway project as early as the 1950s, and Metro's planners never had much confidence about getting approval to build the

⁷ "Spadina Expressway Rendering" (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, n.d.), <http://spacing.ca/archive/spadina/images/expressway-bloor.jpg>.

⁸ For more on the highway revolt phenomenon in other North American cities, see Mohl, "Stop the Road"; For more on the growing cultural hostility to automobility in the Toronto area, see Steve Penfold, "'Are We to Go Literally to the Hot Dogs?' Parking Lots, Drive-Ins, and the Critique of Progress in Toronto's Suburbs, 1965-1975," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire Urbaine* 33, no. 1 (2004): 8-23.

Crosstown Expressway through Rosedale, home to the city's business elite.⁹ As early as 1956, the Ontario Property Owners Association passed a resolution that criticized expressways as an “unnecessary extravagance,” since they simply shift “traffic bottlenecks from one place to another.”¹⁰

By the late 1960s, movements against destructive urban highway projects had spread beyond the realm of quiet but stern dissuasion of politicians by the urban gentry when they were to be directly affected. A waterfront expressway through New Orleans' *Vieux Carré* was defeated by activists in 1969. 1971 proved to be the year the urban expressway ceased to be politically tenable. As Torontonians beat back Spadina, the mighty Robert Moses was forced to abandon his project for the Lower Manhattan Expressway and Boston's Inner Belt Expressway was cancelled after a determined activist campaign.

The seemingly intractable battle over Spadina was not to be won by the suburban majority on Metro Council, thanks to a *deus ex machina* in the form of the new premier, Bill Davis. As the flowers were beginning to bloom on that late spring day, he stood in the provincial legislature and declared: “If we are building a transportation system to serve the automobile, the Spadina Expressway would be a good place to start. But if we are building a transportation system to serve people, the Spadina Expressway is a good place to stop.”

Only three months into his fourteen-year tenure in office, Davis had already made one of the marks that would define his premiership. The forty-one-year-old had been

⁹ Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*, 248.

¹⁰ “Resolution Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Property Owners Association of Toronto and Endorsed by the Ontario Property Owners Coalition,” May 9, 1956, RG19-43, Archives of Ontario.

widely considered Robarts' heir apparent following a long stretch as Minister of Education in an era when that ministry was responsible for 40% of total provincial spending. He came from the progressive Red Tory wing of his party, comfortable with an expansive role for government. His ministerial record bears witness: he created the province's community college system, five new universities, and the TVOntario educational network.¹¹ Though he never ceased reminding voters of his small-town roots in Brampton, just outside Metro and soon to grow tenfold into a major suburb, he was a more urban-minded premier than Robarts and certainly than Frost.

His Spadina decision no doubt had political dimensions. An election was coming up in a few months, and several of the affected downtown Toronto ridings were represented by powerful cabinet ministers. The social-democratic New Democratic Party had a charismatic new leader in Stephen Lewis, with keen hopes to pick up some of those seats. Both Davis' biographer Steve Paikin and his most powerful minister, Darcy McKeough, agreed that the Spadina decision took the wind out of the NDP's sails.¹² Shorn of their most effective Toronto issue, the NDP made no gains in the election that October as Davis romped to an increased majority despite Lewis' unquestioned abilities as a politician.

Still, the decision received far from universal approbation. Suburbanites were outraged, both at the loss of the highway and at the perceived intrusion into Metro Council's jurisdiction.¹³ Metro's planners were irritated—in his memoirs, Hans

¹¹ Steve Paikin, *Bill Davis: Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After All* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2016), 69–98.

¹² Steve Paikin, interview by author, December 17, 2019; Darcy McKeough, interview by author, January 23, 2020.

¹³ Dennis Braithwaite, "Come on, Bill Davis, Admit You Were Wrong," *The Toronto Star*, November 10, 1971. See also the statements in the Ontario Legislature of Vern Singer, Liberal MPP for Downsview in North York.

Blumenthal called Davis' famous statement "demagogic," since "no car ever moves without a human behind the wheel."¹⁴ An October poll showed that only 28 percent of Metro residents supported the cancellation, while 51 percent were opposed.¹⁵ Many of the prominent members of Davis' party were on the other side of the issue, including the powerful treasurer and recent leadership kingmaker Darcy McKeough.¹⁶ Even Toronto's mayor Dennison was furious, later declaring that "We are sick to death with Premier Davis because he has not seen the foolishness of his terrible rash and unnecessary pre-election pledge that the city is for people."¹⁷ For years thereafter, many suburbanites lamented the premier's decision.¹⁸ Though in the end suburban Tory Toronto held firm electorally, Davis clearly took a political risk based on a genuine belief in a less car-dominated city.

As Davis announced the cancellation of Spadina, he also indicated that considerably greater provincial support for transit would be forthcoming to achieve his professed goal of building "cities for people." Since the first provincial subsidies for subway roadbed construction, provincial funding had gradually crept up from \$5.8 million in 1964 to \$8.6 million in 1970.¹⁹ Metropolitan Toronto, even before the Spadina cancellation made their case far more urgent, had made a lengthy presentation to the Minister of Highways and Transport titled "The Need for Provincial Financial Assistance for Public Transit." It blamed the 75% decline in American transit ridership from the

¹⁴ Blumenfeld, *Life Begins at 65*, 249.

¹⁵ Paikin, *Bill Davis: Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After All*, 114–15.

¹⁶ Darcy McKeough, interview.

¹⁷ Douglas Glynn, "Dennison Shocked by Decision," *The Globe and Mail*, June 4, 1971; "'Sick to Death' of Davis over Spadina: Mayor," *The Globe and Mail*, October 12, 1972.

¹⁸ Paul Godfrey, interview.

¹⁹ Mark W. Frankena, *Urban Transportation Financing: Theory and Policy in Ontario*, Ontario Economic Council Research Studies 26 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 122.

Second World War to 1970 on fare increases needed to balance budgets, and warned that Toronto's record high ridership would be imperiled without subsidy. The report recommended assumption of the full cost of capital expansion, along with a per-rider subsidy in the longer term. It discouraged direct subsidy based on a percentage of the operating deficit, claiming that such a policy would discourage efficient operation, though perhaps also because a per-rider grant would enable Metro to reduce its own funding.²⁰

The requests followed Metro Council's consultation with the TTC a few months earlier. The TTC continued to maintain its very conservative policy and its efforts to retain as much independence as possible. The TTC remained wary of dedicated operating funding, fearing political interference in day-to-day operations. "It is believed that capital grants are preferable to subsidies to meet operating deficits," the general manager wrote, "since they would leave the transit authority with the incentive to operate efficiently and live within its budget." The ideal of self-sustainability died hard.²¹

The Association of Ontario Mayors and Reeves, representing the province's many smaller municipalities, had simultaneously been mounting a campaign for operating funding for transit. Their bus-based systems had less need for capital funding than Toronto's subways, but they also struggled to fund adequate transit service from the

²⁰ "The Need for Provincial Financial Assistance for Public Transit" (The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, March 4, 1971), Series 11, File 968, City of Toronto Archives.

²¹ H.E. Pettett General Secretary, TTC to G.M. Foster, Metropolitan Toronto Clerk, November 23, 1970, Series 11, File 969, City of Toronto Archives; General Manager of Operations, "Assistance Required by Toronto Transit Commission" (Toronto Transit Commission, February 9, 1971), Fonds 220, Series 11, File 969, City of Toronto Archives.

farebox and their small municipal tax bases.²² Robarts had already indicated his sympathy for their campaign, though the details were left to his successor.²³

On June 28, a few weeks after the Spadina bombshell, Davis followed through with the announcement of radically expanded provincial support for transit. Refining his memorable line from the Spadina cancellation announcement, he said that his policy would deliver a transportation system that “is more sensitive to people as people, not just people as owners of automobiles.” In a symbolic gesture, the Highway Improvement Act would be renamed the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act.

Substantively, the new act would expand capital funding from “roadbed” to all aspects of subway construction, as well as other types of capital programs such as the acquisition of new buses and associated infrastructure. It eliminated all bias in favour of road transportation and provided for a 50% provincial contribution.

Even more significantly, it introduced provincial support for transit operations. Contrary to what Metro had requested, Queen’s Park would also cover 50% of transit agencies’ annual deficits, up to a cap determined by a formula based on \$0.50 per capita for the first 10,000 in population, plus \$1.50 per capita for the remaining population, plus \$0.01 per revenue passenger.²⁴ The caps were motivated by the fear—shared by the TTC itself—that subsidy from the effectively bottomless provincial treasury would lead to the abandonment of efforts to pursue efficiency and to demands for large wage increases.

²² “Submission to the Honourable G. E. Gomme, Minister of Highways by the Association of Ontario Mayors and Reeves on the Subject of Provincial Subsidy for Municipal Transit,” December 1970, Series 11, File 969, City of Toronto Archives; Melvin L. Swart to Mayor William Dennison, October 9, 1970, Series 11, File 608, City of Toronto Archives.

²³ “Association of Ontario Mayors and Reeves Submission on Provincial Subsidy for Municipal Transit”; Swart to Mayor William Dennison, October 9, 1970.

²⁴ Frankena, *Urban Transportation Financing*, 120–21.

Inevitably, opposition politicians were unimpressed. Liberal MPP Murray Gaunt of the rural constituency of Huron-Bruce lamented that “The 50 per cent is still not adequate. We are engaged in a sort of rearguard action here; we are catching up [...] I think it should be 75 per cent.”²⁵ A year later, Davis took Gaunt’s advice and increased the subsidy to 75% for transit capital expenditures. While the amounts were subject to caps based on population and ridership, the caps were generally disregarded throughout the 1970s. The provincial cabinet continued to tweak the funding formula, overall to the TTC’s benefit: caps were eliminated in 1974, then restored at 75% of the operating deficit in 1977, but with a funding floor at 13.75% of the total operating budget. The sums grew from \$6.6 million in 1972 to \$30.4 million in 1978.²⁶

The provincial decision to subsidize operating deficits was the final nail in the coffin for TTC’s vision of self-sustaining operation. The TTC’s staff could grumble, but it was increasingly apparent that the TTC had no hope of meeting its growing expenses at the farebox.

The other twin pillar of the TTC’s conservative operation fell early in 1973 with the appointment of new commissioner Paul Godfrey. He was an ambitious, Spadina-supporting, 34-year-old Metro Council member from North York, whose mother had been a prominent political activist and professional campaign manager for Progressive Conservative candidates. He replaced the long-time TTC chair Ralph Day as commissioner and saw an opening to dramatically change the TTC’s long-held policies, and an opportunity to make his mark as an emerging politician. He would prove to

²⁵ Murray Gaunt, Ontario Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, July 14, 1971, 3959.

²⁶ TTC Annual Reports.

become one of the city's most powerful figures over the following half-century in a varied political, sports management, and media career.²⁷

The suburban campaign for a single fare had gained new impetus from the provincial subsidy announcement. On January 14, 1972, Metro Council voted 22-4 for a motion moved by Godfrey to endorse a single fare. Still, the Metro Executive Committee, which retained 50% City representation, repeatedly deferred the matter. The TTC commission itself also remained opposed as ever to the idea, though the margin had become much thinner.²⁸

Godfrey's appointment tipped the commission's balance for the first time away from the "administrators," as Kaplan had defined them, and toward the "politicos." The new arrivals eroded the TTC's remote image—"ivory tower," as its new chair Franklin Young described it. They were determined to shake up an institution where decisions were generally arrived at unanimously in private meetings over lunch and free cigars. Just as notably, Godfrey, along with commissioner Karl Mallette, the outspoken former Scarborough controller, and Gordon Hurlburt, a former North York councillor, comprised a suburban majority on the commission.²⁹

The new majority wasted no time in introducing a motion to abolish the zone fare on January 16th, at Godfrey's first meeting. As Godfrey recalled, he had worked to line up

²⁷ Paul Godfrey, interview.

²⁸ "Minutes of Meeting of Metropolitan Council" (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, January 11, 1972); "Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee" (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, April 25, 1972); "Minutes of Toronto Transit Commission" (Toronto Transit Commission, July 11, 1972).

²⁹ "Single-Fare Plan Has High Priority, Mallette Tells TTC," *The Globe and Mail*, January 11, 1973; Thomas Coleman, "The Old Ivory Tower Image Is Being Broken down, New TTC Chief Believes," *The Globe and Mail*, December 27, 1972; Thomas Coleman, "New Day for TTC: A Lot of Dust Was Raised When Karl Mallette Swept In," *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 1972.

support for a decisive move as soon as he was appointed.³⁰ They won the vote by a margin of one, and the new policy would go into effect only six days later.³¹ The commissioners had been emboldened by the availability of operating subsidies, as the TTC's own 1977 review of transit revenue policy acknowledged.³²

The decision was met with a mixed reception. One of the remaining opponents on the commission, D. Crawford Smyth, denounced the move as “Irresponsible.” He reflected the views of the TTC's staff, who had long stated that they “[do] not believe in the philosophy of a single fare for such a large area as Metropolitan Toronto.” They feared the impact on fares for short-distance trips, and therefore continued to dream of fare-by-distance schemes modelled on San Francisco's new BART system, despite the impossibility of its implementation on the extensive bus and streetcar network with then-available technology.³³

The *Globe and Mail's* editorial board was also sceptical, while some suburbanites like Etobicoke Mayor Dennis Flynn were anxious about the cost. The ailing Metro Chair Albert Campbell—soon to be replaced by Godfrey after worsening cancer forced his retirement—was irate and claimed to have been blindsided by the vote. Backed by Metro's Executive Committee, he immediately wrote to the Commission requesting that they postpone their decision.³⁴

³⁰ Paul Godfrey, interview.

³¹ Peter Mosher, “More TTC Riders, but Was It Single Fare or the Rain?,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 23, 1973.

³² Juri Pill, *Transit Revenue Policy Study* (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1977).

³³ “Information for Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Committee” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, January 20, 1972); “Transit Fares Charged on a Mileage Basis” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, March 18, 1969).

³⁴ Alden Baker and Mary Kate Rowan, “Costlier TTC Travel, Higher Taxes Predicted: Decision on Single Fare Angers Metro Executive,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 17, 1973; “Carton Says Policy on Subsidizing TTC Isn't Changed Yet,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 18, 1973; “Not so Neat,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 17, 1973;

The province expressed its displeasure, since they were bound by their new policy to cover half the cost. Transportation Minister Gordon Carton mused ominously about a possible revision to the province's subsidy program, as provincial officials had implied in an earlier meeting with the Metro Executive Committee.³⁵ It proved to be an idle threat—Davis' government had no desire to further antagonize Metro's suburban voters after the Spadina decision.

Curiously, while some of the suburbanites were concerned, Toronto's new mayor David Crombie, elected on a reformist wave after the Spadina activist success, was more sympathetic. In an interview shortly following his election, he said that he would support a single fare if a fare-by-distance scheme were not possible, and he promoted his own plans for heavily discounted off-peak fares or even free transit.³⁶ Crombie maintained that province could pay the cost. "As soon as the provincial government came into transportation in this city in a heavy way," he said, "the door locked after them."³⁷ He sensed the political winds and backed away from the City's long-held opposition to flat fares, as the province and sceptical suburban politicians soon would as well.

A letter to the editor to the *Globe and Mail* demonstrated the popularity of the move: "It is not often that one gets a pleasant surprise on opening one's paper in the morning," North York resident Brigitta Sagmeister wrote about the new fare structure.

Albert M. Campbell to H.E. Pettett, General Secretary, TTC, January 19, 1973, Series 11, File 602, City of Toronto Archives.

³⁵ "Deferral of One Fare Zone for Public Transit," Report to Metro Council (Toronto: Executive Committee, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, April 28, 1972).

³⁶ Alden Baker and James MacKenzie, "Mayor-Elect Has a Frantic Day... ..and Is Still Late for Appointments: Crombie Wants Metro Amalgamated, Supports Cheaper Rides on TTC," *The Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1972.

³⁷ "Ontario Has Obligation to Aid on Single TTC Fare: Crombie," *The Globe and Mail*, January 22, 1973.

“That’s too bad, if it angers [Metro Executive members,] who probably haven’t used a bus in the last 10 years. But for the people out here it is great news. [...] It has been the mistaken belief for years that the people in the suburbs are rich. It’s about time that this myth were abandoned. We have just as many senior citizens, children, teenagers, students, disabled persons, and low-wage earners as the inner city. Many of us didn’t move out here because we particularly wanted to, but because we had to, following the availability of housing.” She said that the new single fare would make Metro “alive” for suburbanites.³⁸

Instead of clawing back its subsidy following the zone fare decision, the province ramped it up. Its 1974 budget eliminated the ceilings on operating subsidies—conditional on municipalities freezing fares. As Treasurer John White explained in his budget speech, “Rising costs of running transit services are now creating financing problems with municipalities. Without additional financing support from the Province, transit fares would have to increase.”³⁹

Suburbanites made the change irreversible by voting with their feet: ridership exploded as soon as the zone fare was removed. The increase of over 36 million annual riders (12.3%) was by far the biggest one-year increase since the creation of Metro—far in excess of the 14 million additional riders that the TTC had projected.⁴⁰ It was helped along by a strong economy and the opening of a two-stop suburban subway extension, along with a massive improvement to service across the system—especially in the suburban

³⁸ Brigitta Sagmeister, “New TTC Fares Will Make Metro Alive for Suburbanites, Reader Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 26, 1973.

³⁹ John White, Treasurer of Ontario, “Budget Statement.”

⁴⁰ “Information for Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Committee”; “1973 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto”; “\$24 Million Deficit Estimated by TTC,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 3, 1973.

areas.⁴¹ The unexpected ridership success also led to an unexpectedly small financial burden. The TTC had projected that the elimination of zone fares would result in a \$26.5 million budget deficit for 1973, but in the end the deficit was only \$17.7 million—about what the TTC had projected without the fare reform.⁴²

The provincial operating subsidies arrived fortuitously, as they would prove to be desperately needed. Throughout the 1960s, the TTC was able to operate on a more-or-less break-even basis, with only occasional modest assistance from Metro. This came despite a nearly 50% increase in vehicle-miles operated. In 1971, however, the TTC once again dipped into deficit, despite substantial growth in ridership. The \$2.9 million fiscal gap was modest, but the TTC warned in its annual report that renegotiating the next year's expiring labour contract would exacerbate the problem. The early 1970s were a time of elevated inflation, though the rates paled in comparison to what was coming. While vehicle-miles operated increased by 1.96% from 1970 to 1971, total expenses increased by 8.39%. The figures for 1972 were similar. The TTC, however, by then enjoyed the promise of a provincial backstop as it faced growing red ink.

That fortuitous timing has, however, led to significant criticism of the deleterious effects of provincial subsidy on the TTC's operations. The elimination of zone fares has long been criticized by many transit activists in the city. John Sewell described it as a “financial disaster” for the TTC. He claimed that the increased suburban ridership following the elimination of the zone fare increased the cost of operation relative to

⁴¹ “TTC Operating Budget for the Year Ending December 31, 1974” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, February 5, 1974).

⁴² “Estimated Annual Expenditures by the Metropolitan Corporation in Respect of Public Transportation” (Toronto: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, n.d.), Series 11, File 602, City of Toronto Archives; “1973 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

ridership.⁴³ However, in the three years following the elimination of zone fares, the number of passengers per vehicle mile actually rose to 3.959 from 3.866 in the three preceding years. Even over the longer term, the number of riders per vehicle mile only declined modestly to an average of 3.706 over the period from 1973 to 1988—hardly a calamitous effect on the system’s efficiency.

Transit systems across North America eliminated zone fare systems as subsidies rose in the 1970s. Planning scholar Martin Wachs criticized such moves as favouring high-income suburbanites and those making long commute trips at the expense of low-income urban riders taking shorter trips.⁴⁴ Economist Mark Frankena also suggested, without figures, that the elimination of zone fares in Toronto would be regressive since the benefit would accrue disproportionately to higher-income suburban commuters, though it would be considerably less regressive if it were funded through the tax system rather than through fare increases on inner city riders.⁴⁵

It is correct that average incomes were higher in the suburbs than in Toronto at the time. However, since Fred Gardiner, affordable housing had been extensively built in Toronto suburbs, and the construction of relatively low-cost apartments in suburban areas had been enabled by Toronto’s frequent and relatively affordable transit. Conversely, much of the region’s wealthy still lived in the leafy midtown neighbourhoods of the City of Toronto. By the 1980s, suburban Metro was home to large concentrations of public and affordable rental housing, in areas like Lawrence Heights, Jane and Finch,

⁴³ Sewell, *Shape of the Suburbs*, 82.

⁴⁴ Martin Wachs, “Pricing Urban Transportation A Critique of Current Policy,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 1981): 243–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944368108976506>.

⁴⁵ Mark Frankena, “Income Distributional Effects of Urban Transit Subsidies,” *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 7, no. 3 (1973): 215–30.

and Malvern. Even by the early 80s, the suburbs were no longer a middle-class monoculture. According to the 1981 census, 12.9% of economic families and 31.9% of unattached individuals in North York were below the low-income cut-off, compared with 17.2% and 34.3%, respectively, in Toronto. Furthermore, commutes by City of Toronto residents to the growing number of jobs in suburban areas, accessible by frequent bus service, were also made more affordable.

Regardless of its distributional effects, the elimination of the zone fare established and sustained a near-unanimous base of support for transit that ranged across the political spectrum, from left-wing urbanites like John Sewell and David Crombie, to conservative suburbanites like Paul Godfrey. Though they disagreed on the details, all agreed that the TTC was a vital public service.

The elimination of zone fares was not the financial calamity that has long been lamented. The TTC's revenues in 1973 declined only by 1.58%; the significant decline in revenue per rider was almost entirely made up by the dramatic increase in total ridership. Expenses, however, rose by 11.2%. In part, it was from new service—the TTC accommodated the new hordes with a 7.3% boost in vehicle miles. Wage expenses, however, rose by 13.87%, and the cost per vehicle-mile climbed from \$1.24 to \$1.29.

The year of the zone fares' elimination points to a different catalyst for the deficits. 1973 marked the beginning of the energy crisis, which caused an unprecedented spike in inflation across the industrialized world. The Arab oil embargo caught Canadian politicians unawares at least as much as it had a Watergate-plagued Nixon Administration, so there is no way that it could have been realistically planned for.

Though Ontario had been obligated to purchase oil for above the world price from Alberta for many years, in order to develop the domestic oil industry, that long-term

subsidy counted for little with Albertans following the quadrupling of the world price in the wake of the Arab oil embargo. They pushed for rapid oil price hikes to bring prices paid by Canadians closer to the world price, an effect that hit the TTC with major increases in the cost of diesel fuel for its buses. From 1973 to 1975, fuel cost per vehicle mile rose by 46.43%. By 1979, Canadian domestic oil cost \$12.75, up from \$3.00 before the crisis and not far from the OPEC world price of \$14.75.⁴⁶ All told, the two energy crises of the decade produced a 308.32% increase in fuel costs per vehicle mile for the TTC from 1973 to 1982.⁴⁷

Inflation was already running at a rapid pace in the early 1970s, exacerbated by U.S. President Nixon's pressure for on Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns for a loose monetary policy leading up to the 1972 American presidential election.⁴⁸ The energy crisis added oil to an already raging fire.⁴⁹ The petroleum price increases affected the cost of virtually every product, many of which were imported, and the TTC's workers demanded wage increases commensurate with their spiralling cost of living. They went out on a 23-day strike in August 1974, asking for a 40% wage increase over two years. The TTC countered with a 19% increase. The strike was eventually ended by provincial legislation, which brought the parties to binding arbitration. The arbitrator—Carl Goldenberg, once again playing an important role in Toronto municipal politics—split the difference and

⁴⁶ Robert Bothwell, Ian M. Drummond, and John English, *Canada since 1945: Power, Politics and Provincialism*, Rev. ed (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 347–48; J. G. Debanné, “Oil and Canadian Policy,” in *The Energy Question: An International Failure of Policy*, ed. Erickson, Edward W. and Waverman, Leonard, vol. 2 (North America) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

⁴⁷ “1973 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.”

⁴⁸ Burton A. Abrams, “How Richard Nixon Pressured Arthur Burns: Evidence from the Nixon Tapes,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 4 (December 2006): 177–88.

⁴⁹ Bothwell, Drummond, and English, *Canada since 1945*, 349–57.

awarded a 31% increase, along with several work rule changes around split shifts and vacation time that were favourable to the union.⁵⁰

As big as it was, the 1975 deal was only the beginning. While the TTC's revenue rose by \$182.4 million from 1973 to 1982, expenses rose by \$223.4 million. Fares climbed 150% from 25 to 62.5 cents in the same period, slightly outpacing consumer price inflation of 131%.⁵¹ Over the period, hourly wages rose by 155.2% from \$6.07 to \$15.49, while overall expenses per vehicle mile rose by 128.5%.

While the TTC's wage increases were enormous to the eye of a 2020s observer, they were hardly atypical at the time. The TTC employees received a 32% wage increase over two years, but in that same two-year period, the consumer price index rose by 22.67%. The TTC was furthermore still struggling to attract sufficient operators to maintain and expand their service.⁵²

The provincial government, concerned at the rapid rise in subsidy, did modify the formula in 1977 to a fixed percentage of operating costs that varied based on population. Transportation minister James Snow wrote that "Those transit systems that have obtained a high revenue to cost ratio in the past and can maintain or improve this ratio in the future will benefit by their efficiency." The fare recovery target was to be 72.5%, a figure that the TTC generally maintained with little difficulty throughout the period.⁵³

There have been many critics who continue to maintain the TTC's traditional scepticism about operating subsidy's negative effects on its operating discipline. Notably

⁵⁰ Wilfred List, "TTC Raise of 32% Ordered in Award Favoring Workers," *The Globe and Mail*, January 22, 1975.

⁵¹ Adjusted for inflation, the 1973 fare of 25 cents would have equated to 58 cents in 1982.

⁵² "1973 Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto."

⁵³ James Snow Minister of Transportation and Communications to J. Kruger, Chief Administrative Officer, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, September 22, 1976.

astute journalist and transit writer Stephen Wickens suggests that the subsidies were unaffordable in the long-term, and led to reckless spending, including Goldenberg's generous arbitration settlement, and to an increasingly lackadaisical attitude to the management of the commission's real estate assets.⁵⁴ His arguments about the TTC's financial management are persuasive, if difficult to falsify, and the TTC's performance in developing its air-rights was dismal after the 1970s. The subsidies, however, were entirely affordable by the province—a fact demonstrated by them having been sustained for over two decades. The TTC's fare recovery never dropped below 70% in the period—well above any peer system—and the provincial subsidies always remained well under \$100 million. In 1984, for example, the province contributed \$61 million to the TTC, a figure that amounted to only 0.2% of provincial spending in the 1984-85 fiscal year.⁵⁵

Examining the United States, Pucher et al make a similar argument to Wickens: the increase in subsidy led more to an increase in operating costs, particularly through wage increases and productivity decreases, than to improvement of service. In the United States, operating subsidies to transit also skyrocketed over the same period. From 1970 to 1980, they grew fourteen-fold from \$318 million to \$4,378 million; federal subsidy rose from nothing to \$1,324 million. Over that time, the operating cost per vehicle mile increased by 205%—almost double the TTC's increase of 111%. Fare recovery in the United States declined from 99% in 1965, to 86% in 1970, to only 42% in 1980. Throughout the period, the TTC's fare recovery stayed above 70%.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Stephen Wickens, interview by author, February 19, 2020.

⁵⁵ "1984 Annual Report" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.); Hon. Larry Grossman, "Ontario Budget 1984" (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Toronto, May 15, 1984).

⁵⁶ John Pucher, Anders Markstedt, and Ira Hirschman, "Impacts of Subsidies on the Costs of Urban Public Transport," *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 17, no. 2 (1983): 155–76; John Pucher, "A Decade of Change for Mass Transit," *Transportation Research Record*, no. 858 (1982).

As Pucher et al argue, part of the reason was that the formula for federal subsidies was based primarily on population and population density, not on ridership. In Ontario, the subsidy was based on actual transit spending. The subsidy of the TTC was effective because it drove a genuine increase in service. In the United States, after the introduction of modest federal operating subsidy, vehicle-miles only increased by 11% over the decade from 1970 to 1980. U.S. ridership increased commensurately—only 7%.⁵⁷ By contrast, the TTC increased the vehicle-miles that it operated by 40.8% over the same period, and ridership increased by 32.5%. The ratio of ridership increase to service increase is strikingly similar for both.

In part, the lack of service expansion in the United States occurred because American transit authorities simply were not persuaded that transit service was viable, since there was no precedent for high transit use in postwar automobile-oriented suburbia. In Toronto, the success of frequent suburban transit had been evident since the early 1960s, and provincial funding simply allowed for more of the same. While Pucher et al persuasively demonstrate that subsidies were largely consumed by increased costs in the United States, that was not inevitable, as demonstrated by Toronto, where they paid for considerable improvements in service.

Despite the corrosive effect it may have had on the TTC's operational discipline, the provincial subsidies were the only solution to keeping the TTC on a path of growth. There was no hope of funding ballooning costs in the inflationary 1970s from the farebox. As affordable as the subsidies were for the province with its unlimited taxing and borrowing power, there was no hope of funding them from Metro's far more limited

⁵⁷ Pucher, "A Decade of Change for Mass Transit."

property tax base. From a \$17.9 million operating deficit in 1973, the TTC needed a \$53.2 million subsidy by 1980, during the second energy crisis. The serious early 1980s recession pushed the TTC further into the hole, forcing a \$92.9 million subvention in 1982. \$55.9 million, or 60%, of that total came from Queen's Park.

Even in 1976, the province's contribution of \$17.6 million to the TTC's operating expenses was equivalent to Metro's total expenditure on roads and traffic, or on the sewage system. It is inconceivable that Metro could have found those sums—let alone the far larger sums needed during the recession early in the following decade. Most importantly, while the province could run a Keynesian countercyclical deficit in a recession, Metro was forced to run a balanced budget. The only alternative would have been the spiral of fare hikes and service cuts that Gardiner had warned about and that had plagued so many American transit systems in the postwar years.⁵⁸

Instead, thanks to the provincial support—secured by the strong political base for transit in the populous suburban portion of Metro—the TTC was able to expand its service and dramatically build its ridership. Fares were kept close to consumer price inflation, while vehicle-miles of service provided rose 41.6% from 80.1 million in 1973 to 113.4 million in 1982. As usual, the riders soon followed the service increases: the TTC carried 329 million riders in 1973, a figure that had risen to 401.2 million (+22%) in 1982, despite the serious recession. Through it all, fare recovery remained within the 70-80% range—far higher than any North American transit system maintains today, aside from the TTC.

⁵⁸ Richard White, "Financing the Golden Age: Municipal Finance in Toronto, 1950 to 1975," IMFG Papers on Municipal Finance and Governance (Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance, University of Toronto, 2016), 22; "1976 Annual Report."

A year after the subsidies were announced, economist Herbert Mohring—then a professor at the University of Minnesota and York University in Toronto as well as a visiting professor at the University of Toronto—produced his seminal paper, which effectively made the case for transit subsidy.⁵⁹ Though he did not make specific reference to Toronto in his article, he must have noticed the increasing number of buses rolling past the suburban York University campus, and the growing crowds of riders aboard, as subsidies had enabled increasing suburban service over the preceding decade. Mohring provided considerable theoretical support for the subsidy program then taking place in Toronto, which significantly increased service and simultaneously increased demand.

The process of subsidy and determination of fares was entirely ad hoc and politically motivated, as Metro’s planners acknowledged in the 1971 transportation plan review, but regardless, it was enormously successful.⁶⁰ Rather than being a disaster that doomed the TTC, the provincial decision to subsidize, which was secured by a political desire to appease suburban voters, was a timely godsend for the commission. Without provincial support, Metro could never have carried the TTC through the inflationary 1970s and the recessionary early 1980s. The only solution would have been the combination of service cuts and fare hikes that Gardiner had warned about so many decades ago, and that had doomed transit providers across the United States.

From the first expansion of suburban service in 1963, Metro and the TTC had created a positive feedback loop for transit that endured for over a quarter-century. The expansion of service was early enough that transit retained a positive reputation as a

⁵⁹ Mohring, “Optimization and Scale Economies in Urban Bus Transportation.”

⁶⁰ “Transportation Finance - Part 2: History of Transportation Finance in Metro, 1961 to 1971,” Metropolitan Toronto Transportation Plan Review (Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Toronto Transit Commission, Ontario Ministry of Transportation & Communications, March 1973), 75.

service that suburbanites wanted in their communities. With the agreement to add service, the TTC grew that base of support, opening the door for Metro to begin subsidizing transit so that a single down year would not result in severe fare hikes and service cuts.

As the political power of suburbanites grew, and as the service expansions generated far more ridership than expected, the provincial government of Bill Davis agreed to generous provincial subsidies of both capital and operating costs. These subsidies arrived just in time to enable the TTC to survive the highly inflationary 1970s, when its wage and fuel costs caused deficits to balloon.

Ridership figures tell the tale. The TTC made up for lost time in 1975, following the strike of 1974. Thanks to the new provincial subsidy, it was able to provide 94.3 million vehicle-miles of service—18% more than in 1973—despite the increased cost of operations following Goldenberg’s arbitration decision. Much of the new service fed the two-stop suburban extension to the Yonge subway that opened in 1974. Ridership climbed by 9%, despite an economic recession and the after-effects of the strike.

The remainder of the decade saw relative stagnation of service overall, as a continuing weak economy, rapid inflation with ensuing fare hikes, and provincial spending restraint precluded major additions of service. The weak economy meant that the employment rate remained stagnant, and the employment rate has been shown to have a statistically significant relationship with transit ridership.⁶¹

Treasurer Darcy McKeough stood in the legislature and said, "The first element in my 1976 fiscal plan is control of spending." It was therefore unsurprising that the province

⁶¹ Taylor et al., "Nature and/or Nurture?"; Gomez-Ibanez, "Big-City Transit Rider Snip, Deficits, and Politics."

tightened somewhat its approach to transit operating subsidy, shifting from basing funding on ballooning deficits to a flat 13.75% of total operating spending.⁶² Though some new suburban bus service was added, downtown streetcar service suffered somewhat—part of a troublesome long-term trend that ignored the TTC’s path to success by producing a miniature spiral of service cuts and ridership declines on the streetcars. As a result of the cuts, TTC ridership stagnated from 1976 to 1979. It was also affected by another strike in 1978, which lasted four days and resulted in another substantial increase in wages. Stagnation, however, was a minor miracle since expenses per vehicle-mile of service skyrocketed from \$1.11 in 1970 to \$2.14 in 1979, and \$2.94 in 1982.

Still, the TTC became alarmed at the stagnation, fearing the spiral that it had successfully avoided since 1963. In 1979, it released a report titled “Transit in Metro: Some Tough Choices.” It described the growing cost pressures, and explained that additional government funding would be needed in order to maintain, let alone expand, transit service.⁶³ Their alarm may have been premature. A recovering economy, an effective transit advertising campaign, and the opening of a subway in the Spadina expressway corridor in the previous year led to an uptick in ridership in 1979, despite a 16.7% fare hike.⁶⁴

Shortly thereafter, a comprehensive review of the TTC’s operations involving its staff and Metro officials resulted in a report with recommendations for a slight increase

⁶² Hon. Darcy McKeough, “Ontario Budget 1976,” http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/historical_documents_project/72-76/ONTARIO_1976_BUDGET.pdf; “1976 Annual Report.”

⁶³ “Transit in Metro: Some Tough Choices” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1979).

⁶⁴ “Annual Report to the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto 1979” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, June 9, 1980).

in subsidy from 30% to 32% and the introduction of a monthly Metropass.⁶⁵ The new pass was a success and, along with the abrupt increase in the cost of driving during the second energy crisis, resulted in a return to the rapid growth of the early 1970s despite a grave economic recession. As the TTC proudly boasted, by 1981 it had surpassed Chicago to become the second-largest transit system on the continent after New York, and in terms of ridership per capita, Toronto was comfortably in first place.⁶⁶

The TTC continued its tradition, begun with the 1963 service expansion, of inviting submissions from local municipalities for increased service. In 1982, for example, they received 70 requests. In that year, the TTC's growing confidence led them to unveil a long-range plan, including a resurrection of the old plan for a downtown east-west subway, by then dubbed the "downtown relief line," a 30-year "long range concept" of a rapid transit ring across the north of Metro, the implementation of transit priority measures and other technological innovations, and even consideration of a possible transit union with the province's GO Transit commuter rail service and municipal operators in the fast-growing suburbs outside Metro. Indeed, that was where the growth was to come in future: the TTC projected that Metro would grow by only 50,000 people over the following decade.⁶⁷

When Bill Davis announced his transit funding package after the cancellation of Spadina, he promised funding for both operating and capital expenses. He could hardly have anticipated the effect on finances that the tumultuous 1970s brought. By the 1980s, the TTC was receiving about 16% of its total operating expenses from the provincial treasury. The sums climbed ever year, amounting to \$84 million in 1988. With other

⁶⁵ Juri Pill, "Transit in the 1980's: A New Direction" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1979).

⁶⁶ "Annual Report for the Year 1981" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, July 20, 1982).

⁶⁷ "Annual Report for the Year 1982" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.).

programs like health and education equally placing ever-greater demand on the province's budget, transit funding was not unlimited.

The province, without stating it explicitly, made the choice to sustain the operations of the TTC's service and to avoid severe fare hikes at the expense of capital growth projects. When the Spadina subway opened in 1978, it was the last significant expansion of the subway in the 20th century. Still, the rising cost of operating subsidies was not the only reason for the abandonment of many capital projects in the decades to follow. In a retrospective article, engineer Ed Levy lamented the days when the Bloor-Danforth-University subway could be approved without any significant commitment of provincial funding, but transit activist Steve Munro correctly pointed out that the cost of transit infrastructure has risen far faster than inflation—the \$200 million cost of the subway when it was built in the 1960s would have amounted to only \$1.710 billion in 2020, which is a small fraction of the 2020 cost of a subway project that size.⁶⁸

The province made the correct, though difficult, choice. By focusing on operating funding, the TTC was able to maintain a stable and consistent level of service across the metropolitan region. Though its rapid transit route map remains far less impressive than that of many American cities, its ridership per capita and mode share are both far higher than any comparable city. The relatively young system also remained in good physical condition, as spending on maintenance remained adequate for the moment. If the province had chosen to continue paying for subway construction while the TTC was forced to slash its local service, the TTC would have been forced into the same spiral that decimated transit in the United States. Despite the lack of new rapid transit, the TTC's

⁶⁸ Wickens, interview; Wickens, "Transit Lessons from the Past."

ridership grew dramatically in the 1980s. In the 1990s, when the province chose the opposite approach of funding subway construction while abandoning operating funding, just as the city was hit by a serious recession, the TTC was sent into a spiral from which it has never entirely recovered.

The nearly two decades from the cancellation of Spadina to the economic calamity of the early 1990s could be considered to be Toronto's golden age. That was doubly true for the TTC, which adroitly navigated the treacherous waters of the 1970s and became a widely acknowledged model for transit systems across North America by the 1980s. Toronto was far from a transit nirvana: buses, streetcars, and subways suffered from overcrowding; a plan to provide dedicated lanes for busy bus routes was short-lived; budget shortfalls were all-too-often made up by cuts to the very frequent downtown streetcar routes, whose ridership suffered as the rest of the system boomed; and, most importantly, the TTC's successful model was not extended as the urban area grew beyond the boundaries of Metro. In part, the gains of the 1980s likely owed to the fare and service improvements of the previous two decades; Currie and Wallis' metanalysis suggests that over the longer term (over five to ten years), the effect of fare and service improvements on ridership are almost double short run (six to twelve months) impacts.⁶⁹ Still, the TTC was emblematic of Toronto's reputation as a shining urban light at a dark time for North American cities.

In American cities, the dominant discourse in the postwar era was one of decline. As planning historian Robert Beauregard writes, "The proclaimed decline of cities has framed the lives of those who came of age in the United States in the last half of [the

⁶⁹ Currie and Wallis, "Effective Ways to Grow Urban Bus Markets – a Synthesis of Evidence."

twentieth century].” This real and perceived decline was politicized and actively propagated, and it manifested itself in numerous ways, ranging from outmigration, deteriorating infrastructure, and diminishing political clout. “Even people who moved to the suburbs,” Beauregard writes, “watched stories of arson and crime on the nightly news, debated whether to shop downtown during the holidays, and drove through physically devastated neighbourhoods on the way to their offices in the city.”⁷⁰

In Toronto, the story was entirely different. The postwar years were a time of optimism, of excitement, and of renewal. The anxieties that animated the urban reformers of the 1970s were too much development, not too little. In a 1985 interview with *Cinema Canada*, Actor Peter Ustinov described Toronto, in a phrase that many Torontonians are eager to remember, as “New York run by the Swiss.”⁷¹ He was referring, no doubt, to its relative lack of crime, well-swept streets, and well-maintained buildings, but no doubt also to its clean and busy subway filled with middle- and upper-middle-class people making their way to work and play from their homes in both the city and the suburbs.

Brigitta Sagmeister, in her 1973 letter to the editor of the *Globe and Mail* praising the abolition of the zone fare, wrote that she and her fellow suburbanites “want to be part of this City of Toronto. That’s why we want a modern and efficient transit system. Even if we live in North York we are still Torontonians and want to take pride in our city, and that’s why we don’t abandon it but travel back downtown again and again.”⁷² It is highly improbable that such a letter could have been written by an American suburbanite at that

⁷⁰ Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*, x.

⁷¹ “The Best of Toronto: A Selection of Superlatives from Toronto the Good,” *The Globe and Mail*, December 23, 1986.

⁷² Sagmeister, “New TTC Fares Will Make Metro Alive for Suburbanites, Reader Says.”

time, when white flight was at its height and transit in their communities was actively opposed by suburbanites keen to maintain racial segregation.⁷³

Transit planning in most American cities embraced the idea, to borrow a Canadian term, of two solitudes: city and suburban—code, in all too many cases, for Black and white. Racial prejudice was at the root of the growing urban-suburban divide. African-Americans were trapped in a central city that was denied reinvestment by “redlining” of prewar neighbourhoods. Even if they could afford to move to the suburbs, they were almost always prevented by a variety of overt and implicit means of discrimination, up to and including violence.⁷⁴ The lack of transit service—sometimes a deliberate policy to reinforce segregation—made most of the territory beyond the historic city limits entirely inaccessible for those who could not own a car.

In Toronto, these racist policies did not exist for a very simple reason. While it now loudly boasts of being one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with a civic motto of “Diversity Our Strength,” Toronto at that time was overwhelmingly white. Though prejudice unquestionably existed—against Catholics, immigrants, and the poor generally—the inescapable element of race was not a factor in the same way as it was in postwar urban America.

Still, it is transit that enabled the metro area to be tied together. It enabled poor people to move to the suburbs, preventing the type of egregious segregation that is all-

⁷³ See, for example, Philip J. D’Anieri, “Regional Reform in Historic Perspective: Metropolitan Planning Institutions in Detroit, 1950-1990” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2007); Pfaff, “Rhetoric in, Pocket Book Out: A Historical Analysis of Suburban Opt-Out Transportation Funding in Metropolitan Detroit”; Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 188–96; Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity*.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*.

too-common in American metropolitan areas. It enabled a downtown to continue thriving the population became increasingly suburban. It meant a politics where the main fear of civic activists and urban reformers was demolition of the downtown for commercial development, rather than vacancy and abandonment as with so many of Toronto's peers on the Great Lakes. By ensuring that Toronto's transit system encompassed both urbanites and suburbanites, Metro and the provincial government made Toronto a more equal, less segregated, and more prosperous community.

Epilogue

The 1980s were a halcyon period for the TTC. Backstopped by the provincial and Metro subsidy, the TTC was able to resume service improvements, which in turn grew ridership dramatically. From 1978 to 1988, the TTC increased vehicle-miles of service provided by 22%, while ridership grew by 37%. The TTC had built out a comprehensive network of frequent bus service covering the entire Metro area, serving local trips and feeding into a fast and high capacity subway system for long-haul trips. As the economy and population grew through the 1980s, riders filled out the system, stabilizing its fare recovery with the help of slowing inflation, and justifying further service improvements—a virtuous cycle in contrast with the vicious cycles that plagued North American transit systems in the 1950s and 60s.

Take the evolution of one bus route as an example. Lawrence Avenue East is a long east-west arterial road that passes through Don Mills and the heart of Scarborough. The latter borough was portrayed by its native Mike Myers (though transplanted to an American setting to satisfy Hollywood marketers) as the quintessential white-bread suburb in the 1992 film *Wayne's World*. Today, it is home to an extraordinarily diverse population that has migrated to Toronto from all over the world, but especially from East and South Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. For much of its length, Lawrence Avenue is flanked by an endless procession of interchangeable strip malls fronted by parking lots, with a few small apartment buildings interspersed. Behind them is an endless warren of meandering cul-de-sacs lined with single-family homes, each with its accompanying driveway and garage. It typifies Toronto 1950s and 1960s suburbia. It is quite indistinguishable from American suburbs like Aurora, Illinois—Scarborough's

American substitute in *Wayne's World*—excepting Aurora's historic downtown and Scarborough's more recent apartment towers.

Where Lawrence East couldn't be more different from those American locations, however, is its bus service. The 54 Lawrence East was created as part of the 1963 service expansion. Already in 1964, as houses were still sprouting from farm fields and apartments were nearly nonexistent, a bus rolled past the strip malls every 7.5 minutes in rush hour, every fifteen minutes in the midday, and every thirty minutes in the evening.⁷⁵ The service only got better thereafter. By 1991, headways had shrunk to every three-and-a-half minutes in the peak, eight minutes forty seconds mid-day, and eleven minutes in the evening. Forty buses were needed to operate the evening peak service. Even on weekends, headways were never worse than every fifteen minutes, late into the evening. Even overnight, a bus still came every half-hour.⁷⁶ Service in the 2010s is similar, though weekend headways are now a maximum of ten minutes.⁷⁷ By the late 1970s, the route was already serving nearly 25,000 riders per day, a figure that grew to 35,000 by the late 1980s (similar to where it remains in the 2010s).⁷⁸

Though Scarborough and Aurora, Illinois may look similar, they differ in one fundamental way: their transit service. Despite its population of nearly 200,000, Aurora has only a handful of bus routes. Even its best-served route only offers service every half-

⁷⁵ "Normal Day Service in Operation in Metropolitan Area as of Tuesday January 7th, 1964"; "Census Profile 2016 - Ward 21" (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2018), https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/8f47-City_Planning_2016_Census_Profile_2018_25Wards_Ward21.pdf.

⁷⁶ "Scheduled Service Summary: Board Period Commencing Sunday, July 21, 1991" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 1991), <https://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/reports/1991.pdf>.

⁷⁷ "Service Summary: May 7, 2017 to June 17, 2017" (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, May 2017), <https://transit.toronto.on.ca/archives/reports/ttc-service-summary-20170507.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Steve Munro, "TTC Surface Ridership and Service: 1976 to 2016," *Steve Munro* (blog), February 3, 2017, <https://stevemunro.ca/2017/02/03/ttc-surface-ridership-and-service-1976-to-2016/>.

hour on weekdays, ending entirely at 8pm. On Sunday, there is no bus service at all. Even though there is commuter rail service to Chicago from Aurora on Sundays and at 11pm on weekdays, there are no buses to meet it.⁷⁹

Though transfers—the “scourge of suburban transit,” as Cervero described them⁸⁰—are always an inconvenience, the high frequency of the TTC’s suburban grid network made connections comparatively easy. Waiting five minutes for a transfer on a suburban street corner is far more palatable than waiting forty-five minutes.

A further lesson can be drawn from the TTC’s suburban transit success: even if average speeds are low and travel times are long, transit can attract considerable ridership as long as it is available with a minimal wait at all hours of the day and night. This is true even in low density areas with high car ownership, like the catchment area of the Lawrence East bus. The Lawrence East bus has an average speed of only 18.5 km/h in the weekday midday, which is very slow for a route that many people are riding for considerable distances. Nevertheless, its ridership of 36,500 on an average weekday is higher than all but two bus routes in New York City. And it is far from the busiest suburban bus route in Toronto (see Table 1; for comparison, the busiest route in New York City [M15 Lcl/SBS on First and Second Avenues] carries 46,087⁸¹).

⁷⁹ PACE March 2019 transit schedules

⁸⁰ Robert Cervero and John Beutler, “Adaptive Transit: Enhancing Suburban Transit Services,” August 1, 1999, 1, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/10s0c7s0>.

⁸¹ “Subway and Bus Ridership for 2019” (New York City: Metropolitan Transportation Authority), accessed July 22, 2020, <https://new.mta.info/agency/new-york-city-transit/subway-bus-ridership-2019>.

Table 1: TTC Fifteen Busiest Suburban Bus Routes.⁸²

Route or Corridor	Average Weekday Ridership
Finch East	57,000
Wilson/Weston North	53,000
Finch West	47,300
Don Mills	44,700
Jane	44,200
Lawrence West	43,900
Dufferin	42,100
Sheppard East	40,600
Morningside/Scarborough	38,700
Eglinton West	38,500
Lawrence East	36,500
Steeles West	33,100
Eglinton East	32,500
Markham Road	31,300
York Mills	29,900

This observation is of particularly critical importance to transportation policy debates, where large capital projects dominate popular and political discussions. This remains the case even though such megaprojects have high budgets, lengthy development

⁸² “Ridership Statistics for Surface Routes” (Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission, 2018), https://www.ttc.ca/PDF/Transit_Planning/Ridership_and_service_statistics_2018-A.pdf.

times, and are frequently vulnerable to cost overruns.⁸³ This is not to negate the value of large transit capital projects, but it is striking that a slow, mixed-traffic bus in a relatively low-density neighbourhood like Lawrence East has comparable ridership to that of the entire 74 km St. Louis MetroLink light rail system, for example.

Toronto sometimes seems almost willful in its rejection of even the most basic improvements to its already successful bus routes. Reserved bus lanes have long been discussed in the city, but only two suburban routes enjoy limited priority in bus and carpool lanes as of 2020. As early as 1974, Toronto began a one-year pilot project for providing priority lanes on four of its busiest corridors. Though they did not improve travel times, the priority attracted a significant number of additional riders. Public opposition prevented the continuation of the lanes beyond the single year, and periodic revivals of discussion bore minimal fruit.⁸⁴

Currie and Wallis, in their metanalysis of determinants of bus ridership, estimated that poor reliability—as is often the case with the TTC’s mixed-traffic bus routes—can depress ridership by 10-20%. This is well supported by the TTC’s recent experience. In 2017, the TTC revived the concept on the busiest downtown streetcar route, with a pilot project that was eventually made permanent. This demonstrates the ridership potential of even modest priority, particularly when the change is well-publicized. Though the actual effects on travel time and reliability were quite limited (the number of severe delays were reduced, a few minutes were saved on end-to-end timings in the afternoon peak,

⁸³ Bent Flyvbjerg, Nils Bruzelius, and Werner Rothengatter, *Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alan A. Altshuler and David Luberoff, *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

⁸⁴ “Bus Lanes Bring Outcry, Cass Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 16, 1975; “TTC Proposal: Reserved Bus Lanes Opposed by Bremner,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 30, 1977; Sean Fine, “Congestion Costly: Special Bus Lanes Urged by TTC Staff,” *The Globe and Mail*, March 9, 1987, sec. Metro.

while there was no change in the morning peak), ridership on the long-established line grew by 16% virtually overnight, from 72,000 to 84,000 riders per day.⁸⁵

Small measures like transit priority can have outsized effects when there is already a strong base of transit ridership, as has been achieved on many of Toronto's suburban routes. Such measures are long overdue. Still, the already-strong base on mixed-traffic routes demonstrates that frequency and span of service, more than even speed and reliability, are the key to attracting tens of thousands of riders per day.

Even without the large up-front investment in physical infrastructure of LRT, high-order BRT, or even reserved bus lanes, the example of the TTC demonstrates that it is possible to generate unprecedented suburban transit ridership and revenue simply by improving the frequency and span of existing mixed-traffic bus service. This service improvement has to be dramatic, however, when made from the base of the hourly frequency, early evening last trips, and limited weekend service that is all too typical in American suburbs—and also in the Toronto suburbs outside the City of Toronto.

In the United States, by contrast, this approach of radically improving local suburban service has never been tried. With the inflation of the 1970s, megaprojects like Washington's Metro faced considerable cost overruns, which heightened public opposition. Don Pickrell's heavily cited 1990 study of rail transit projects, produced for the UMTA itself, argued that ridership projections on many projects were overly optimistic.⁸⁶ Yet Toronto's ridership projections throughout the period consistently *underestimated* transit ridership, especially after local service improvements. Most

⁸⁵ General Manager, Transportation Services, Chief Planner & Executive Director, City Planning, and Chief Customer Officer, Toronto Transit Commission, "The Future of King Street: Results of the Transit Pilot."

⁸⁶ Don H. Pickrell, "Urban Rail Transit Projects: Forecast Versus Actual Ridership and Costs" (Washington, D.C: Office of Grants Management, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, October 1989).

gravely, as historic city centres began to be associated with marginalized minority communities, public transit connecting suburbs with downtowns—especially transit that was useful for more than unidirectional peak period commute trips—became increasingly stigmatized. Some suburban counties, most infamously in Atlanta, rejected rapid transit projects on more-or-less explicitly racist grounds.⁸⁷

Fundamentally, public transit investment got caught up in the broader disillusionment with government programs in the wake of the perceived failures of the Great Society. As scholars ranging from disaffected liberals like Nathan Glazer to combative free-marketeers like Milton Friedman achieved increasing prominence with their criticisms of generous social programs and the Keynesian consensus, public opinion began to shift against many forms of government intervention—especially in cities. Transit was certainly not excluded. Ronald Reagan was emblematic of this view, and his administration fought a scorched-earth battle in opposition to transit funding, pitted against the more sympathetic Democrat-controlled Congress and its support-base in major cities. Transit had, with exceptions mainly among services oriented to affluent suburban commuters, been cemented in the public imagination as a mode for those who have no other option. This was especially true for local bus services. Mumford's claim from the 1950s that transit was unpopular because it had been allowed to decay remained equally true a half-century later.

Metropolitan Toronto followed a different path. Certainly, it was fortunate in not being faced with white flight from the city centre, or with opposition to transit in order to further racial segregation, but it also succeeded in making transit a public service that

⁸⁷ Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 188–96; Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity*, 49–74.

enjoys support across the political, ideological, and geographic spectrum. It did it by providing a local service that is sufficiently attractive that it is used nearly as much by residents of low-density postwar suburbs as by residents of the condominium towers and prewar townhouses of the downtown core.

Toronto's transit success is a story of good timing, good political choices, and good planning. Without all three, it is unlikely that Toronto would have emerged from the age of the automobile with a transit system that is the choice of so many members of its suburban middle class.

The provincial decision to create a metropolitan government, and to give that metropolitan government control of the TTC, made it possible—and even politically necessary—to expand high-quality urban transit service to new suburbs right as they were built, rather than waiting decades for demand to somehow spontaneously materialize despite very poor service. Frederick Gardiner as a singular figure was essential to bridging the urban-suburban divide at a critical time, recognizing, long before most politicians of his type, that the automobile could not be a transportation panacea in a large and growing city, and that it was essential to provide the subsidy needed to prevent the transit system from slipping into a spiral of fare hikes, service cuts, and ridership decline.

The suburban political pressure created by the metropolitan governmental system forced the TTC to take action to placate the suburbs. They did so by providing a comprehensive grid of bus service. That planning choice enabled anywhere-to-anywhere travel by transit, an outcome that would not have been produced by other conceivable suburban service options like peak-oriented commuter express buses. The bus grid was the spark that ignited Toronto's dramatic transit revival.

The power base for transit that was then established in the fast-growing and politically influential suburbs drew the provincial government into active support for transit. When Premier Davis angered suburbanites by cancelling the Spadina Expressway, he was able to mollify them by radically increasing transit funding because they were already riding transit and considered it an asset to their communities. This provincial support was also strikingly fortuitous in its timing, because it allowed the TTC to survive the surging inflation of the tumultuous 1970s and the recessionary early 1980s.

The story of Toronto-area transit after the 1980s, however, has been one of the unlearning of the lessons of its success. When Metro was created in 1953, it included vast swathes of farmland around the city, and the Planning Board's authority extended still further. The intention was that the entire region would enjoy unified services, including transit, and comprehensive planning. Gradually, however, the inexorable spread of suburbia filled Metro's seemingly capacious boundaries, and then began to surpass them. There was endless discussion of extending Metro to include the new suburbs, and some suburbs like Vaughan and Markham even lobbied for it. Davis' government, however, did not have the appetite that Frost's government had to force an expanded Metropolitan government. Drawing from comprehensive regional planning efforts since the Robarts era, they had become increasingly drawn to decentralization.

Darcy McKeough, Minister of Municipal Affairs, in opposition to expansion of Metro, argued that "the experience of the great urban centres on the North American continent clearly reveals that no adequate system of government has yet been discovered that is capable of managing such vast and complex urban communities."⁸⁸ There may also

⁸⁸ "The Regional Municipality of York: Address by the Honourable W. Darcy McKeough, Minister" (Ontario Department of Municipal Affairs, May 6, 1970); Darcy McKeough, interview.

have been more political considerations pointing to a preference for separate regional governments to counterbalance the power of Metro, rather than the creation of an expanded Metro that was so large that it could rival the provincial government.

The province created separate “mini-metros” out of the surrounding counties of Peel, York, and Ontario (adopting the name Durham as it was merged with Durham County to the east). Like Metro, they were responsible for services like water, sewage, policing, and major roads. Transit, however, was largely left to languish; it rated not a mention in the ministerial statements that announced plans for the establishment of the Regional Municipality of York and of regional government in Peel and Halton.⁸⁹ When the original Metro was created, the TTC was, by contrast, its crown jewel and a focus of discussion.

Unlike in 1954, when the TTC was expanded to serve the entire urban region, the lower-tier towns and cities contained within the regional municipalities slowly built out their own small transit systems, in many cases adding service long after subdivisions were built. Invariably, service was far more limited than was available in Metro’s suburbs. Riders crossing municipal boundaries were also forced to pay punitive double fares, further suppressing ridership. To this day, transit mode share is far lower in the suburbs outside Toronto than in suburbs served by the TTC, even controlling for income and population density.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ “The Regional Municipality of York: Address by the Honourable W. Darcy McKeough, Minister”; “A Tentative Proposal for Regional Government in Peel-Halton: Address by the Honourable W. Darcy McKeough,” January 22, 1969.

⁹⁰ Jonathan English, “The Effect of Transit Service on Demand: Natural Experiments in Greater Toronto” (Transportation Research Board 2019 Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C, 2019), <http://amonline.trb.org/68387-trb-1.4353651/t0026-1.4365088/1441-1.4496402/19-02176-1.4493669/19-02176-1.4496441>.

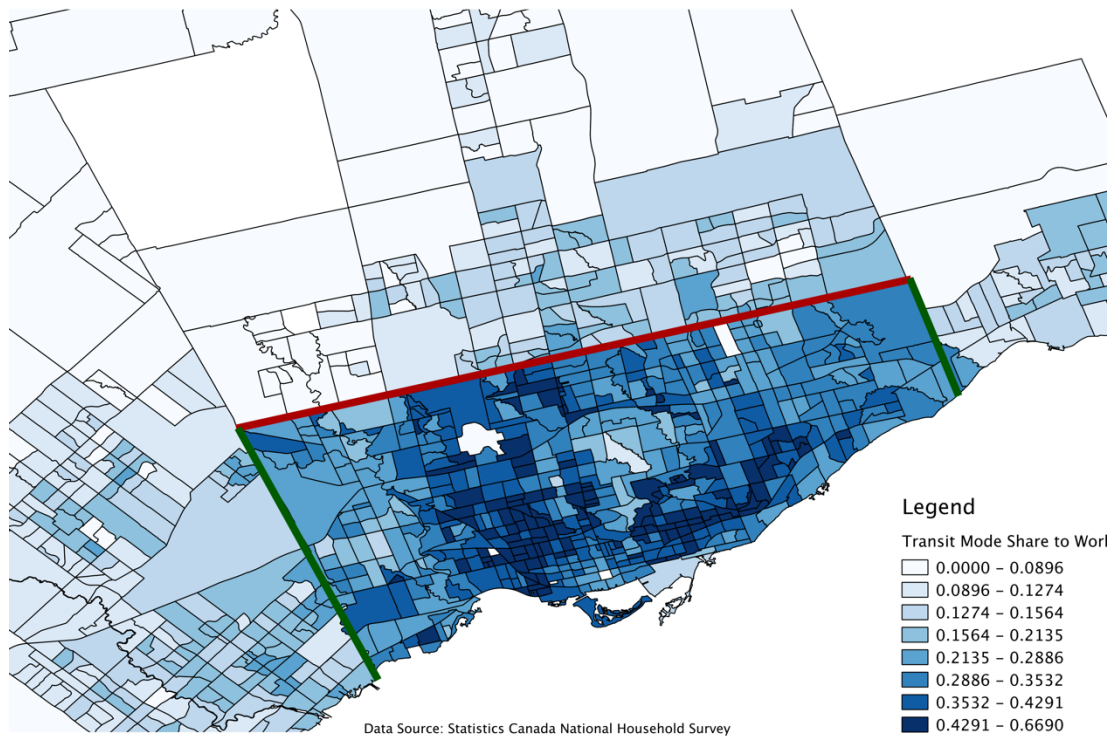


Figure 26: Toronto and Suburbs Transit Mode Share to Work by Census Tract, 2011.

In effect, Toronto-area suburbs outside Metropolitan Toronto pursued a much more American approach to suburban public transit provision, and their outcomes closely match those in similar American suburbs. This, in effect, provides a natural experiment within the Toronto region, enabling comparison of the effects of different transit service policies in neighbouring jurisdictions with a shared socio-economic structure and political system. This is an important avenue for future research.

The province's GO Transit commuter rail service has been responsible for nearly all of the growth in transit capacity to the downtown core since the Spadina subway opened in 1978. Using existing rail corridors allows for the addition of new routes far more cheaply than through construction of underground or elevated rapid transit. But its approach to operations also ignores the successful TTC model. Instead of aiming to

provide an all-day, anywhere-to-anywhere service, as had resulted in such evident success for the TTC, GO followed the traditional North American commuter rail model in focusing almost entirely on unidirectional peak period commuting to the downtown business district. Rather than closely integrating its rail service with local bus services, which is the key to high ridership on the TTC subway, GO has focused largely on park-and-ride. Many of its stations have spacious garages, like BART, while there is no fare or service integration whatsoever between GO and TTC's buses and subways.

The Toronto model offers tremendous promise for regional rail: while reliance on walk-in traffic forces a rapid transit route to be located close to major trip generators, often necessitating expensive tunneling, there is much greater leeway for the location of a rapid transit route that relies primarily on feeder bus traffic. It can therefore be reasonable to build rapid transit along existing rail corridors, greatly minimizing cost and community disruption, rather than needing to develop an underground or elevated route. A park-and-ride-oriented commuter service will have little traffic after its parking lots fill up in the morning, leaving its infrastructure essentially useless until the evening peak. A commuter rail route fed by a TTC-style feeder bus network can carry enough passengers all day long to justify far more than simply peak period commuter service.

The TTC is a clear example of a transit system that has managed to achieve ridership that is well beyond typical expectations in the low-density suburban areas that make up much of its service area. This Toronto model, however, has largely been forgotten in North America—even in Toronto itself. Understanding how it succeeded, as well as its failings, will enable its lessons to be applied both in its own backyard and in communities across the continent. The Toronto model offers the genuine possibility of reducing automobile dependence without needing to completely rebuild the suburbs—perhaps the

only way to achieve that necessary goal on the timeline needed to avert catastrophic climate change. If we choose to remember them, the lessons offered by decisions made more than a half-century ago remain as fresh and as relevant as ever in the twenty-first century.

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