401RT Express

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Transforming Transportation in Toronto

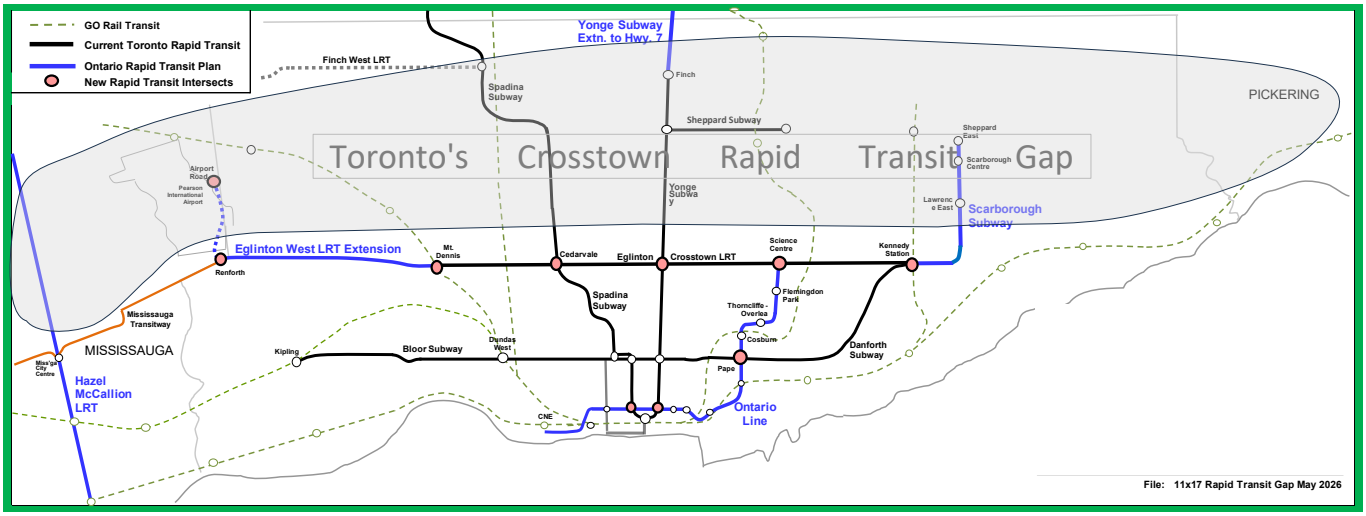
November 2026

The 401RT Express: Rescuing Transportation Across Toronto

Thirty years from now, a million more people may call Toronto home, and hundreds of thousands more will commute into the city from neighbouring municipalities every day. Travel demand growth will exceed the expected transit ridership growth of transit initiatives that have been identified in the Ontario Government's Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan for Toronto.

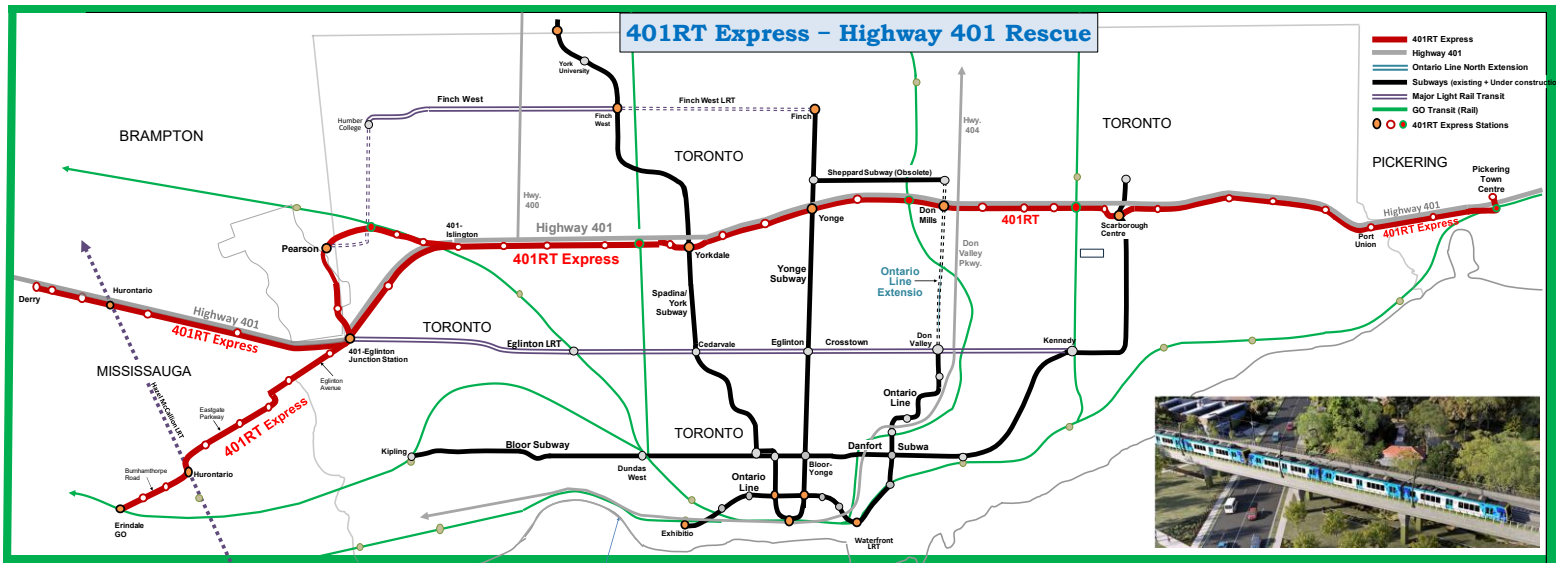
Achieving a sustainable transportation system in Toronto must recognize that most of Toronto's traffic problems originate in the suburbs, including in the northern half of Toronto, where 1.3 million residents and 300,000 jobs today will increase by close to a third or more by 2055. Highway 401 in the core of the Toronto area is at high risk of becoming non-functional due to traffic gridlock. The Premier of Ontario has recognized the danger and has proposed to add highway capacity by way of a tunnel under Highway 401. The end result may be better traffic flow on Highway 401 where the tunnel exists; however, encouraging more dependence on using personal automobiles will add to congestion on municipal roads, many of which are already congested during peak periods and cannot be widened.

Gridlock on highways and municipal roads must not happen. A principal reason for congestion in the core of the Toronto area, and particularly on Highway 401, is the absence of practical public transit options across northern Toronto. There is simply no practical alternative to driving. Fixing the gap requires a continuous east-west rapid transit line from Mississauga to Pickering through the underserved northern half of Toronto.



The rapid transit line illustrated below – the ***401RT Express*** – is an almost completely elevated $70 billion rapid transit line running along the south edge of the Highway 401 corridor from Liverpool Road in Pickering to Derry Road in Mississauga, plus a seamless and integrated extension from Islington Avenue at Highway 401 to Pearson International Airport and from there southward to and through downtown Mississauga. Altogether it will be a seamless 89 kilometres in length with up to 50 stations and a cruising speed between stations averaging 85 kilometres per hour. **Without this rapid transit line,** or something very similar, there is **no hope** of achieving the level of reductions in automobile traffic necessary to avoid costly increases in traffic congestion in the core of the Toronto area, and little hope of avoiding full gridlock on much of Highway 401.

The 401RT Express would require a $4 billion extension of the Ontario Line from Eglinton Avenue East to the 401RT Express in order to prevent an overcrowding of the Line 1 subway on Yonge Street. (i.e., $74 bn total)



The 401RT Express would connect to up to 13 north-south rapid transit lines and 100+ municipal bus routes. It would transform transportation in the Toronto area and increase quality of life significantly. The 401RT Express would ease the financial burdens of many thousands of householders struggling with costs of a personal automobile, which may cost between $5,000 to $20,000 per year to own and use. A list of more than 65 general benefits of the 401RT Express is available at www.401rt.ca.

The 401RT Express is likely to be extraordinarily successful. Major shifts from driving to the Express will occur because travel on Highway 401 and on alternative local roads will often be slower than traveling on the 401RT Express for the east-west segment of trips. Added to this basic impetus for modal shifts to transit, other factors will increase transit ridership by 2055:

- GO Transit's six intersects with the 401RT Express will generate approximately 27 million new GO Transit trips and 24 million new 401RT Express trips.
- The Islington-to-Pearson-to-Erindale GO branch of the 401RT Express will generate additional trips to and from downtown Mississauga, the Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre, and points in Toronto.
- The transit modal share of trips to and from Pearson International Airport and its adjacent employment area will be multiple times higher than is currently the case – perhaps 25 million transit trips per year.
- Additional municipal buses on north-south routes intersecting with the 401RT Express will generate transit ridership travelers whose destinations are not the 401RT Express; an estimate is 52 million new transit trips per year by 2055.
- New and existing urban development in the form of high density housing and office uses at and near the 401RT Express will have higher than average rates of transit usage.
- The increasingly burdensome costs of automobiles will accelerate the shift of trips to the 401RT Express.
- Growth in truck movements will affect gridlock and encourage additional shifts to transit for commuters.

Without the 401RT Express, those additional transit trips will not occur. Overall, the Express will generate more than 400 million new transit trips per year by 2055.

Key destinations directly served by the 401RT Express include Pickering Town Centre, Scarborough City Centre, the Line 1 subway, Yorkdale, Pearson International Airport and its surrounding employment area, and Mississauga's City Centre area. The northwestern arm of the 401RT Express would reduce the highly congested portions of Highway 401 between Highway 410 and Highway 400.

The rapidly-increasing use of artificial intelligence may have an effect on both transit ridership and travel by automobile. Based on one high scenario – a 50% net loss of office jobs and a 20% net loss of non-office and transport jobs – the result would be Highway 401 traffic remaining at 2025 levels by 2055, and reduce 401RT Express and GO Transit by ridership by up to half; even so, ridership on the 401RT Express would be close to that of the Line 2 subway. However, estimates of AI's effect on employment and job creation vary widely, and are highly uncertain. At the 50%/20% net job loss level, the perceived need for a Highway 401 tunnel would end; ridership on the 401RT Express would remain operationally viable.



Given many public concerns about the cost building new rapid transit lines, the 401RT Express includes significant cost-saving measures. It is proposed to be almost entirely elevated above ground, with only 3.3 kilometres being underground, at Yorkdale and at Pearson. It is aligned to run within/above existing transportation corridors, minimizing effects on communities and property acquisition costs. Stations are compact and largely of standardized design, without spatial extravagance.

Importantly, the 401RT Express would render some existing rapid transit expansion plans unnecessary. The 401RT Express would attract significant ridership from the City of Toronto's $4.65 billion Scarborough LRT extension to Malvern and the Sheppard Subway, rendering it non-viable. The closely-parallel Sheppard Subway (including a $7.5 billion extension to Scarborough Centre) would be eliminated entirely, and be replaced by enhanced bus services. The $1.3 billion Eglinton West LRT extension from Renforth Drive to Pearson would be an obstruction to the 401RT Express, and should not be built. In total, a cost avoidance of up to $13.5 billion can be realized, less Sheppard Subway closure costs.

The 401RT Express is estimated to cost $64 billion to create, plus approximately $6 billion for rolling stock. It would very likely be cost shareable with the Government of Canada (historically up to 40%); the Highway 401 tunnel, which could cost $90 billion, would not be shareable. Overall, the 401RT Express could be $50 billion less expensive for Ontario to build than the highway tunnel, and with better congestion outcomes.

When compared to the recently-approved Alto high speed rail service between Toronto-to-Quebec City, the 401RT Express could be up to 22 times as cost effective by 2055, based on cost per passenger (24m trips by 2055 div. by $90 bn for Alto; 440m trips div.by $74bn for 401RTX). Importantly, ***the 401RT Express is an immediate need*** to maintain the functionality of Highway 401 and to reduce overall congestion in the Toronto area; the Alto HSR may be nice to have, but is not critical.

The 401RT Express, as an elevated rapid transit line, can be built relatively quickly once preconstruction planning and design are completed, with multiple independent crews working simultaneously on 401RT Express segments, stations, operating systems, and maintenance yards at various locations. Overall, at least 40,000 jobs per year can be created during its development. Visit www.401rt.ca for more information on benefits, route alignments, effects on Scarborough, and more, including the downloadable file "Rapid Transit Rescue".

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2041 Toronto Rapid Transit Scenario

Highway 401 is rescued from gridlock.

Travel demand growth is diverted to transit.

Not shown: 600 more north-south buses to improve service frequencies and access to rapid

Up to 13 new North-South rapid transit connections and 100+ new N-S bus connections are created.

401RT Express:
- Elevated Sections (94% of total)
- Underground Sections
- New Rapid Transit Intersects
- GO-401RT Express Intersects
- Ontario Line North Extension
- Highway 401
- GO Transit (Rail)

Steeles BRT or PBL
Islington
York University
Access to York University from across Toronto via 401RT Express is improved.
Humber College
Finch West LRT
Finch West
Finch
Travel times by transit to Pearson and nearby employment areas from across northern Toronto are significantly reduced.
Sheppard Ave. buses
Local and Express Sheppard Ave. buses
Sheppard Subway is closed
Seneca - Finch
Hwy. 404
The 401RT Express replaces the Sheppard Subway, and provides better service for Scarborough and for Toronto.
Don Mills
Hwy. 400
Highway 401
Avoid Sheppard Subway extension to Scarborough Town Ctr. Save $7.5bn.
Finch East
Huntingwood
Sheppard Scarborough
Access to & from Malvern is improved.
Attendance at Metro Toronto Zoo increases.
PICKERING
29 minutes to Yonge Street
Durham Transit ridership increases.
Pickering Town Centre
Whites Road
Bayly-GO
Possible Alto HSR stn
Meadowvale
Port Union
401RT Express
Markham-Centennial
Neilson-Malvern
Morningside-UTSC
Scarborough Centre
Brimley
1 km. link
401-Kennedy
Stouff. GO
Warden-401
401-Victoria
Leslie GO
Bayview
401-Yonge
York Mills
Kern
Avenue
401-Bathurst
Yorkdale
401-Dufferin
Barrie GO
401-Keele
401-Jane
401-Weston
401-Islington
Kipling North
Etobicoke North
Martin Grove
Woodbine/ Hwy.27 GO
Alternate Alignment
Airport Hub
Convair
Dixon-Martin
401-Eglinton Junction Station
Replaces Renforth location
MACC
Eglinton West LRT
Mt. Dennis
Eglinton Crosstown LRT
Eglinton LRT Renforth to Pearson not needed. Save $1.3 bn.
Cedarvale
Spadina/ York Subway (Line 1)
Yonge Subway (Line 1)
Long-desired east-west rapid transit links to GO Rail are created .
Possible Alto HSR stn E of Birchmount Rd.
Ontario Line Extension
Don Mills-Lawrence
Barber Green
Don Valley
Kennedy Station
Lawrence East
Line 2 Subway Extension
Add Brimley-Danforth Stn. (Convergence of Eglinton, Brimley and Danforth Roads)
Kingston Road
Extend Eglinton East LRT to Kingston Road only. Save $3.0 bn.
Student/worker access to UTSC & Centennial College is improved.
Rapid access from Scarborough & Pickering to Pearson & airport employment area.
Social isolation reduced for people who do not drive cars, as 401RT Express improves access to destinations across Toronto.
401RT boosts Line 2 Subway ridership.
401RT Express increases GO ridership.
Traffic on many city streets is contained or reduced.
Corporate area is revitalized.
401RT Express eliminates the perceived need to add road capacity to Highway 401.
Automobile congestion at Pearson is reduced. Major improvement to transit access is created.
Derry BRT or LRT
33 minutes to Yonge Street.
Derry
Mississauga Road
Mavis
Hurontario
Kennedy-Britannia
Dixie
Highway 401
401RT Express
401RT Express maximizes ridership on the Hazel McCallion LRT.
Hwy. 410
MISSISSAUGA
Tahoe
Mississauga Transitway
Tomken
Central Parkway
Hurontario
Confederation
Mavis
Erindale GO
Burnhamthorpe Road
Hwy. 403
Hwy. 403 congestion is reduced.
34 minutes to Yonge Street.
Hazel McCallion LRT
Dundas BRT
401RTX+Line 1 Subway creates alternative to 427/Gardiner drive to downtown.
Kipling
Dundas West
Line 2 Subway
Howard Park
Queen
Jimmie
Dufferin
Liberty - GO
Strachan
Ontario Line
King-Bathurs
Exhibitio
Bloor-Yonge
Pape
Main
401RT creates faster transit access to downtown from across northern Toronto
Waterfront West LRT (concept)
Concept for Ontario Line extension under high-density King West
Waterfront East LRT
401RT rescues Don Valley Parkway from gridlock.

Commuter parking garages can be located above or near numerous 401RT Express stations.

401RT storage and maintenance yards can be placed above Highway 401 at several locations.

The 401RT Express in the Highway 401 corridor is almost entirely elevated along the highway's south edge. 75% of bordering lands are non-residential. Stations are normally above ramp configurations south of the highway.

The 401RT Express – with 96% of its 90-kilometre length elevated above grade – may cost $68 billion to build (including $6bn for rolling stock). The 401RTX renders $12 billion of other planned rapid transit unnecessary and duplicative.

The 401RT Express will generate more than 400 million new transit trips per year by 2055, including 27m more GO Transit trips, plus 14m new Ontario Line trips. 13 new North-South rapid transit connections and more than 100 new North-South bus connections are created.

Destinations near Highway 401

1 Pearson International Airport
2 Mississsuga Airport Corporate Centre
3 Hurontario LRT
4 Malton community
5 Employment Area
6 Woodbine Entertainment Centre
7 Kitchener GO to/from Brampton
8 Downsview Park
9 Yorkdale Mall
10 York University
11 Barrie GO
12 Humber River Hospital
13 Downtown North York
14 Seneca College
15 Richmond Hill GO
16 North York General Hospital
17 Fairview Mall
18 Stouffville GO
19 Scarborough Town Centre
20 Centennial College
21 Malvern Community
22 Scarborough Health Network
23 UnivY of Toronto Scarborough
24 Toronto Zoo
25 Pickering Town Centre
26 Rouge National Urban Park

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