

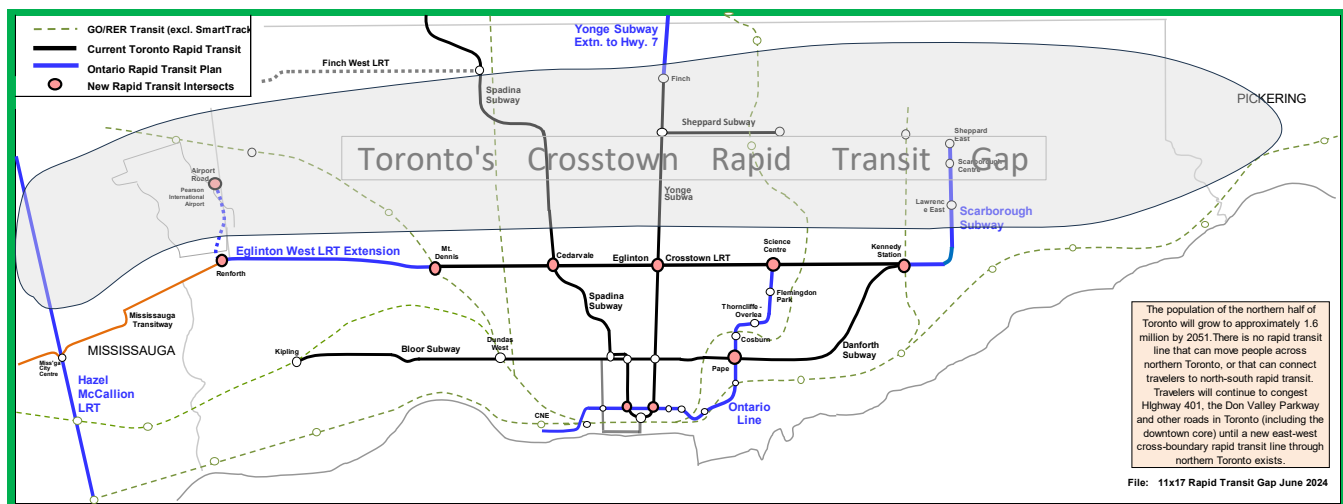
July 2025

## The 401RT Express: Rescuing Transportation in Toronto

By 2051, a million more people will call Toronto home, and many thousands more will commute into the city from neighbouring municipalities. Travel demand growth will offset the expected transit ridership growth of transit initiatives 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 approximately 30% by 2051. Until there is a practical public transit alternative to driving across northern Toronto or to/from northern Toronto, congestion on Highway 401, the Don Valley Parkway, and many other roads will worsen. The number of cars and trucks that use Highway 401 between Derry Road and Liverpool Road – more than a million every day – will increase to the point of gridlock for long periods each day. That must not be allowed to happen.

The enormous rapid transit gap across northern Toronto must be resolved.



The most significant piece of public transit infrastructure preventing major modal shifts to public transit is the absence of 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 a full-scale rapid transit line with 50 stations that extends 90 kilometres from Pickering Town Centre through northern Toronto to Islington Avenue at Highway 401, and westward from there consisting of two divergences, one to Pearson International Airport and to west of Mississauga's City Centre, and the other continuing along Highway 401 into northwestern Mississauga.





The 401RT Express would require an extension of the Ontario Line from Eglinton Avenue East to the 401RT; this extension is already in the Government of Ontario's rapid transit plans.

The 401RT Express is proposed to be almost entirely elevated above ground – 90 kilometres from end to end, including 64 kilometres over the Highway 401 corridor. It would cost an estimated \$49 billion to build, plus approximately \$5 billion for rolling stock.

The gross cost of the 401RT Express can be significantly reduced, because it would render some currently planned rapid transit initiatives unnecessary and operationally non-viable: Most of the Eglinton East LRT extension, the Eglinton West LRT extension from Renforth to Pearson, and the Jane LRT.<sup>Note 1</sup> Moreover, the 401RT Express would divert most Sheppard Subway users; the Sheppard Subway would not connect well to the 401RT Express, and should be eliminated entirely and replaced by enhanced bus services from Port Union Road to Weston Road. Not building the planned Sheppard Subway extensions and eliminating the Sheppard Subway would save approximately \$6.1 billion, net of subway decommissioning costs. In total, \$12.4 billion can be saved. In this scenario, the 401RT Express would be five times as cost-effective as the recommended offsets, based on cost per new transit user.

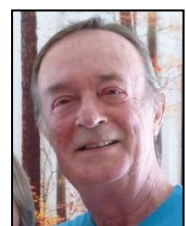
Among its many benefits, the 401RT Express will reduce highway and road congestion in Toronto, provide the northern east-west link to up to 13 north-south rapid transit lines, boosting their ridership, and reduce the financial and social costs of dependency on travel by automobile for tens of thousands of households. A list of more than 60 general benefits is available at [www.401rt.ca](http://www.401rt.ca).

When compared to the recent push for a Toronto-to-Quebec City high speed rail service, the 401RT Express can be more than ten times as cost effective as the HSR, based on cost per transit user (comparison table below). Importantly, the 401RT Express is an immediate need to maintain the functionality of Highway 401; the HSR is not as critical.

The 401RT Express should be seen as a continuation of current rapid transit expansion activities. Given the rapidity of growth and road congestion in the Toronto area, the construction of the 401RT should begin as current rapid transit projects begin to wind down (by 2030), with advance planning beginning as soon as possible. Construction will be challenging, due to the speed that the 401RT must be built to overcome the congesting effect of growth in travel demand. Highway 401, the Don Valley Parkway and other roads will benefit somewhat from the Ontario Line, the Eglinton LRT and enhanced bus services, but their effects will be inadequate, and temporary.

John Stillich

**About me:** My background until my retirement was a career as a corporate financial analyst at Queen's Park for the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, focusing on program expenditure analysis and planning for a number of ministry programs, and coordinating budget processes. Subsequent to my retirement, I have focused my attention on sustainable transportation and land use planning, including having worked with a small (no longer active) organization called the Sustainable Urban Development Association. I also produced a document entitled "Newburg: Embracing High Density at the Urban Fringe". In 2018, my wife and I moved from Mississauga to Innisfil, where we live near our daughter and her family.



**Note 1 :** Current and planned rapid transit initiatives rendered obsolete by the 401RT Express:

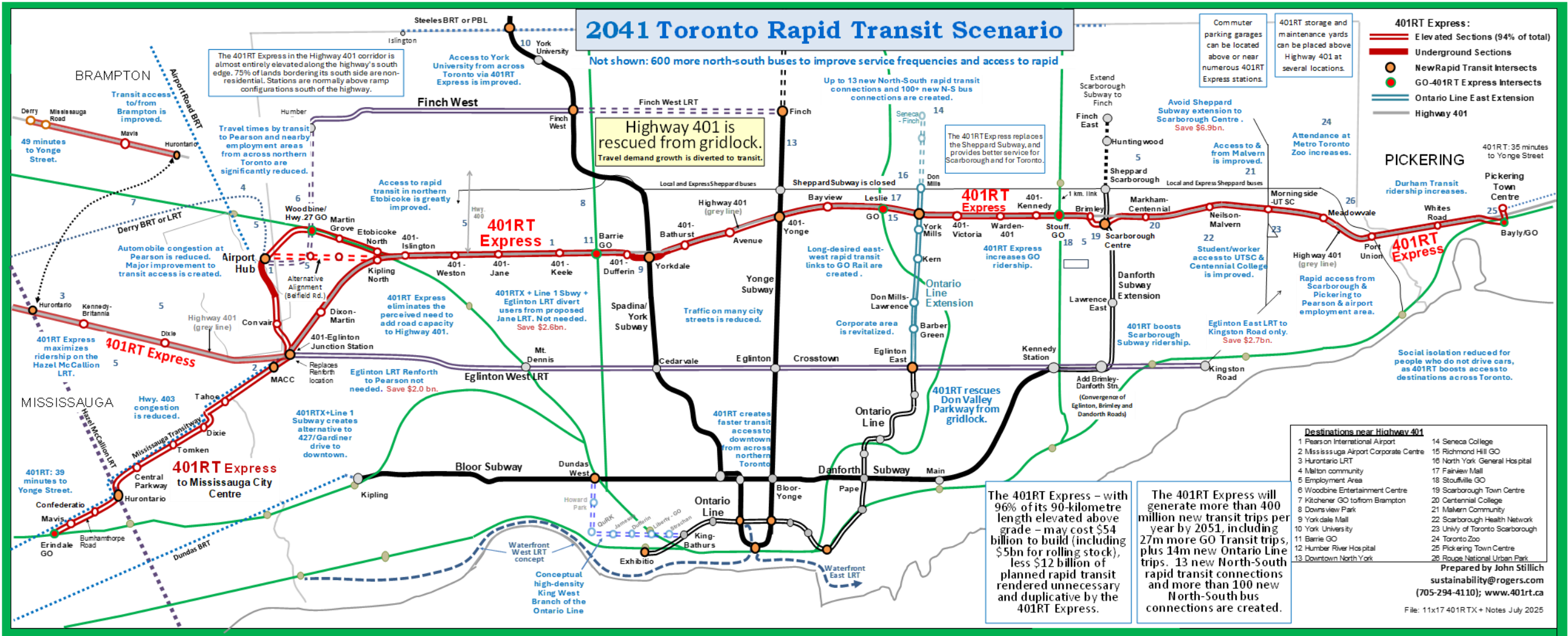
1. The \$4.5 billion Eglinton East LRT to Malvern, less a useful \$1.8 bn extension of the LRT to Kingston Road. Access to Malvern and the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus is faster for many travelers via the 401RT than the LRT.
2. The \$2.6 billion Jane Street LRT. The 401RT, Finch West LRT, and Eglinton LRT (extended to Jane) would divert many longer-distance trips from Jane buses. LRTs will be in mixed traffic south of Highway 400.
3. The \$1.0 billion Eglinton West LRT Renforth to Pearson. The Line 1 subway and 401RT combination would deliver most downtown trips to Pearson as fast as the Eglinton West LRT and provide direct transit trips to Pearson from northern Toronto.
4. The \$6.9 billion Sheppard Subway extension to Scarborough Centre station. The Sheppard Subway is closely parallel to the 401RT, which would draw users of the Sheppard Subway, to the point that the subway would be operationally non-viable.

Comparing Rapid Transit Effectiveness	Infra-structure Cost \$m	2051 Trips per Year Millions	Cost per New Trip	Kms. Of Track	Cost per Km. of Track
401RT Express - Pickering to Erindale GO	38,683	303	128	137.9	#VALUE!
401RT Express - Derry to Islington/401	10,819	61	177	16.0	\$4,126
401RT Express - Rolling Stock	4,900		16		
401RT Express Effect on GO Transit	\$ by GO)	27			
Bus ridership increases	800	52			
Total Recommended Infrastructure	55,202	443	\$125	153.9	\$359
Recommended Expenditure Offsets:					
Sheppard Subway Extn. to Scarboro Ctr.	6,900	6	\$479	9.0	\$675
Decommissioning Sheppard Sbwy; net	-800				
Eglinton West LRT - Renforth to Pearson	1,000	4		7.6	\$724
Eglinton E LRT - Kndy to Malvern to McCowan	4,500	11		19.1	\$141
Eglinton E LRT - Kndy to Kingston Rd (build)	-1,800	-3		-4.5	\$400
Jane Street LRT - Steeles to Bloor	2,600	8		16.5	\$909
Total Expenditure Offsets*	12,400	26		47.7	\$260
Net New Cost Commitment	42,802		\$97		
Potential Gain in New Trips per Year		443			

\* The 401RT draws ridership from these higher-order transit routes, rendering them operationally non-viable. Overall, these trips are not lost; they would be served by existing bus services or trips are diverted to the 401RT Express.

Comparing Rapid Rail Concepts	Millions of Trips/yr by 2051	Gross Infra. Cost (\$Mil)	Cost per New User	Kms.
HSR Toronto to Quebec City (Recent Cost Estimate)	40	\$90,000	\$2,250	1,000
401RT Express*	443	\$49,502	\$112	90
Cost effectiveness advantage of 401RT Express:			<b>20.1</b>	

\* Excluding rolling stock



30+ years from now, there will be a million more people living in Toronto. The **401RT Express** is essential if highways and local streets in Toronto are to be decongested. Currently-planned rapid transit expansions will struggle to keep up with travel demand growth, and will not reduce overall use of motor vehicles on city streets. Adding road capacity to Highway 401 is not a solution; its impact will be to encourage driving and to increase congestion on local roads.

The **401RT Express** should be recognized as inevitable and urgent. The 401RT Express's seamless length, speed of service, connectivity, and high visibility will make it a success. It will render numerous current rapid transit initiatives unnecessary and operationally nonviable: the Eglinton West LRT Phase 2 extension to Pearson International Airport, the Sheppard Subway extn (and the Sheppard Subway itself), most of the Eglinton East LRT, and the Jane Street LRT. Spending on these will waste an estimated \$12 billion.

The \$54 billion **401RT Express** (including \$5bn rolling stock) is highly affordable, and is estimated to be three times as cost-effective as rapid transit initiatives currently being implemented, based on new transit trips generated. Its net cost to build would be as low as \$42 billion (after cost avoidances of aforementioned initiatives). Federal cost sharing can be 40%. The 401RT Express (or similar) would be transformative for transportation in Toronto, and is essential for achieving climate change goals. It is essential for tens of thousands of households that struggle with the high costs of automobile ownership and use. Visit [www.401rt.ca](http://www.401rt.ca) for more information. Call John Stillich at 705-294-4110 or visit [www.401rt.ca](http://www.401rt.ca) for more information.

