

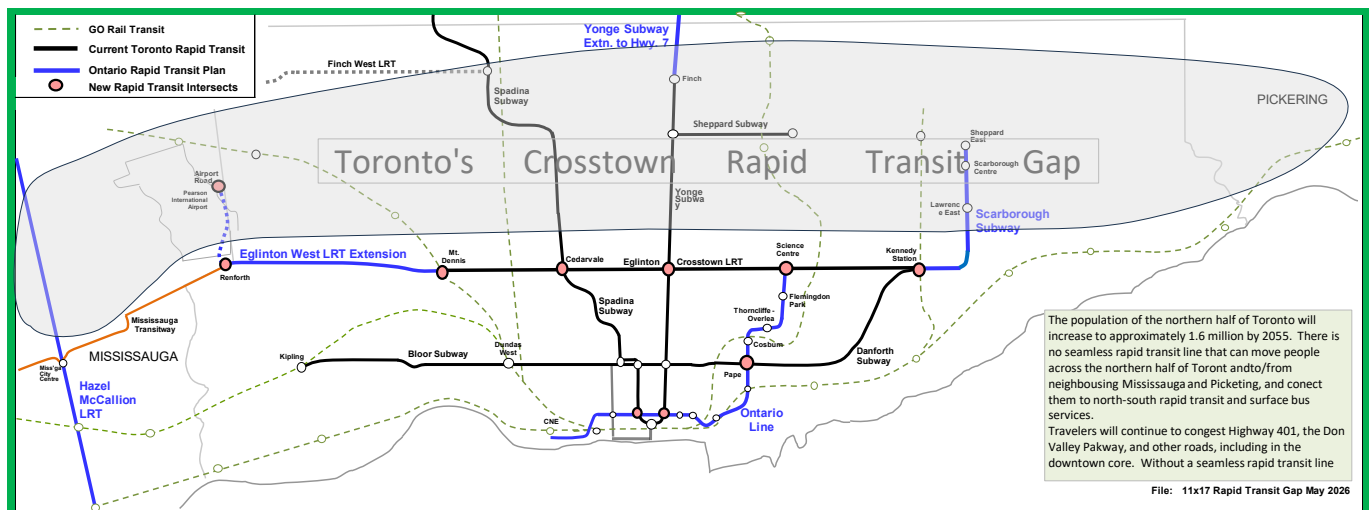
August 2026

The 401RT Express: Rescuing Transportation in Toronto

By 2055, 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.

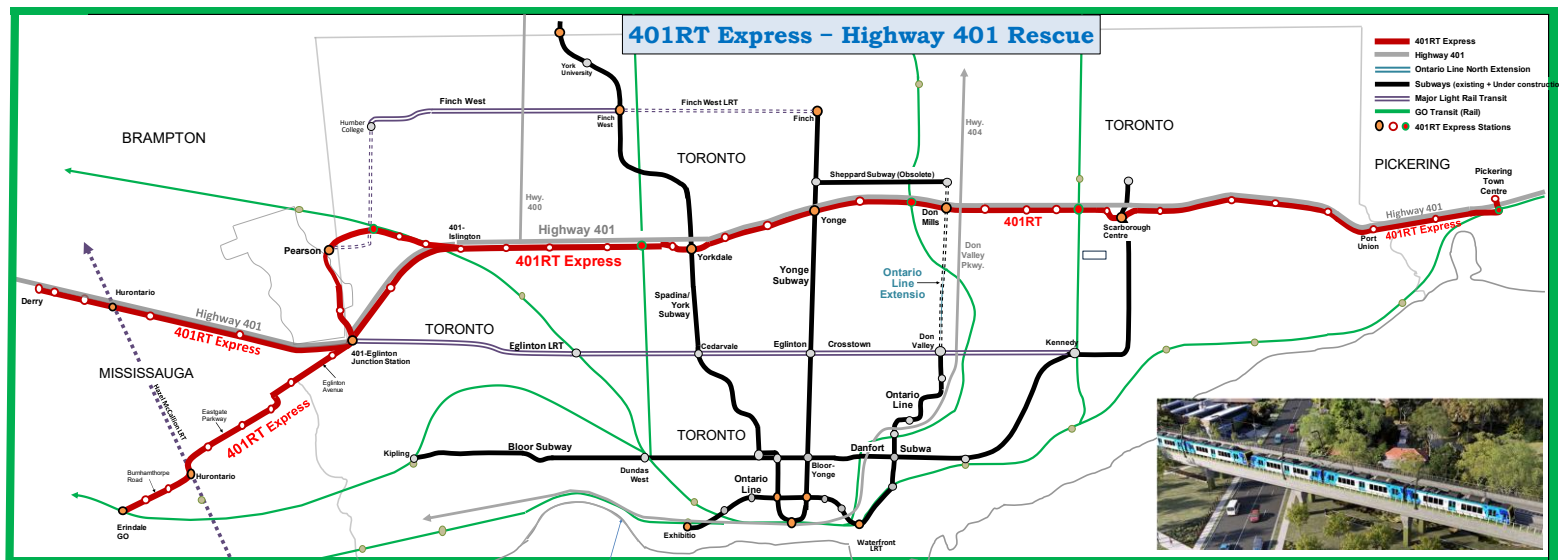
Gridlock on highways and municipal roads must not happen. A principal reason for congestion in the core of the Toronto area, and particularly on Highway 401, is the absence of practical public transit options across northern Toronto. There is simply no practical alternative to driving.



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 89 kilometres in length with 50 stations and a cruising speed between station 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 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 modal shift, other factors will increase transit ridership by 2051:

- 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 automobile ownership and use will accelerate the shift of trips to the 401RT Express.
- The growth in truck movements will also 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.



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 overloading of the Line 1 subway on Yonge Street; an extension of the Ontario Line to Sheppard Avenue East is included in the Government of Ontario's projections for future rapid transit.

The 401RT Express is proposed to be almost entirely elevated above ground, with only 3.3 kilometres being underground, at Yorkdale and at Pearson.

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 its \$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 be eliminated. In total, a cost avoidance of approximately \$13.5 billion can be realized, less Sheppard Subway closure costs.

The 401RT Express would cost an estimated \$64 billion to build, 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 25 times as cost effective by 2055, based on cost per passenger (24m trips by 2055 div. by \$90 bn for Alto; 440m trips/\$64bn excl. trains 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, with six or more independent crews working simultaneously on 401RT Express segments, stations, operating systems, and maintenance yards at various locations, once preconstruction planning is completed. Overall, approximately 40,000 jobs per year can be created during its development. Visit www.401rt.ca for more information in the downloadable file "Rapid Transit Rescue".

