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Plan for Toronto Waterfront Development Continues Without Waterfront East LRT

Toronto, ON – More Transit Southern Ontario is calling on all levels of government to fund the Waterfront East LRT (WELRT) project before first occupancy in 2031 to prevent thousands of future residents being left without access to a major transit link serving their community.

On January 28, 2025, the City of Toronto, along with the provincial and federal government, announced a new commitment close to \$1 billion in additional funding to accelerate new housing developments at Quayside and Ookwemin Minising as part of Waterfront Toronto's revitalization plan in the Port Lands neighborhood. This would support the construction of 14,000 new homes for approximately 25,000 people, with first occupation expected around 2031.

However, progress on enhancing public transit infrastructure near the waterfront have continued been slow-moving, in particular with the WELRT, a significant proposal by the City of Toronto to expand the streetcar network in a dedicated right of way from Union Station, along Queens Quay East to Cherry Street, to serve the growing East Bayfront and Port Lands neighbourhoods.

Originally proposed in 2011, the WELRT has encountered delays and funding issues whilst design works have not significantly progressed for construction. In 2023, the City provided an estimated cost of up to \$2.57 billion over 10 years and assumes the project will reach substantial completion in 2032. By the end of the 2024 fiscal year, Toronto City Council had allocated a budget of \$135.3 million for the project.

The City is seeking additional funding from the Canada Public Transit Fund, with the provincial government considering supporting the City's request for capital funding. Mayor Olivia Chow supports the proposal, but two crucial early works segments, the Yonge Street Slip Infill and the Queens Quay East extension, vital for streetcar service, are still in the design phase.



The City's Transit Expansion Division's Executive Director has announced plans for a Q1 2026 report by staff if approved by City Council, which would include detailed design progress, cost estimates, phasing plans, property acquisitions, project coordination, traffic management, and intergovernmental funding discussions. Many, including transit advocate Steve Munro, have noted potential timing challenges, stating that the Port Lands development could surpass the completion of the light-rail line.

Without the WELRT, future residents and businesses may face major challenges, as the line is expected to provide 50,000 daily trips, connect 100,000 residents, and create 50,000 jobs. In 2022, over 30 organizations signed a joint statement with the Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA), advocating for the funding of the Waterfront East LRT, highlighting its significant impact on the waterfront.

Toronto's waterfront revitalization requires high-capacity transit links to connect to major transit hubs like Union Station and East Harbour, integrating with TTC, Ontario Line, GO Transit, VIA Rail, and Ontario Northland. Governments must secure funding and accelerate construction of the Waterfront East LRT to ensure success, as delaying this project risks leaving thousands of future residents without a critical transit link and undermining the waterfront's vision.

About More Transit Southern Ontario

More Transit Southern Ontario is a grassroots organization of riders advocating for more connected, affordable, frequent, and reliable transit networks across Southern Ontario.

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