



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

September 15, 2017

Ms. Katerina Minaeva
EBR Coordinator
Environmental Policy Office
777 Bay Street, 7th Floor, Suite 700
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J8

2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy EBR Registry Number: 013-0889

Dear Ms. Katerina Minaeva,

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is pleased to provide comments on the *Draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy* (NOMTS) developed by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM).

The following comments aim to provide feedback on the goals and directions in the draft Strategy: 1) Do they capture the key areas and partnerships needed to ensure that the transportation system in northern Ontario meets users' needs over the next 25 years? 2) Recognizing that the strategy has a 25-year vision, which directions are most important over the next ten years to focus the Action Plan?

Goal 1: Connected and Prosperous – Increase and modernize transportation options to support everyday living and economic activity in northern Ontario.

- The absence of any specific reference to the future role of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission must be rectified. This agency is already a Crown organization. It has sectoral knowledge and past experience, and can play a vital part in transportation planning and implementation for the North, far beyond its current corridor of operations.
- Highways 11 and 17 are vital corridors for moving people, goods and services. The first priority should be placed on improving road infrastructure between urban centres in order to further develop the economic and physical conditions for scheduled passenger services, housing density and expanded service centres.
- Rail and marine facilities for the freight transportation supply chain should be further supported by a study of public and private sector partners to cultivate further economic development and increase shipping efficiencies to northern Ontario.
- Passenger train service needs to be made more attractive to external funding. Tourism and trade can spur economic development to provide a framework for a regional intercommunity transportation network.

- The road network should plan for through routes, instead of road stubs, in order to better link communities. In review of Figure 3, there are potential opportunities to link primary and secondary highways oriented towards urban centres that could develop passenger services to small communities as a continuous route.

Goal 2: Safe and Reliable – Enhance traveller safety and system reliability, and minimize travel delays and complications.

- Opportunities to improve driver information technology should optimize all channels in electronic and static means.
- In provision of rest areas, these should be modern service centres similar to those found along 400-series highways in southern Ontario that can also provide multipurpose and reliable access to food, fuel and amenities (e.g. bus shelter) to local communities.

Goal 3: Address Remote and Far North Challenges – Work with remote and Far North communities to address unique transportation needs with more reliable connections between communities and to the all-season ground transportation network.

- It is not clear that the Province has an overall direction, plan or strategy for the development and implementation of efficient and sustainable transportation systems to service remote Indigenous communities of the Far North, especially those that could be impacted by resource development in the ‘Ring of Fire’ region. This direction for provision of transportation systems will have far-reaching impacts for the economic development, culture and way of life of Indigenous peoples, and it must become a priority for the Province. This work must incorporate traditional knowledge and ways of decision-making.
- The opportunities noted in 3.3 and 3.6 include promising actions that can contribute to enabling connected communities through both winter and all-season infrastructure.

Goal 4: Integrated and Innovative – Anticipate and respond to economic, technological, environmental and social change to link people, resources and businesses.

- ‘Robot Vehicles’ and ‘Driverless Technologies’ could have an impact of transportation planning for the North that may even eclipse broadband infrastructure deployment over the next 20-25 years. The Strategy must create ‘policy space’ and financing to ensure that Northern Ontario transportation networks are the equivalent of those in other parts of the Province when this technology is ready to be deployed.
- The definition of Transportation Demand Management on page 75 is not accurate, it is typically used for various efficiencies that increase transportation system efficiency and Ministry of Transportation definitions exist. Rather the description refers to northern and remote telecommunications.

Goal 5: Healthy and Sustainable – Create a cleaner and more sustainable transportation system in northern Ontario by reducing GHG and other environmental and human health impacts.

- While climate change affects us all and this must be a part of transportation planning in this region, there are other suggested goals, for example, inter-city travel by bicycle at Section 5.5 that reflect a lack of appreciation of travel and living in the North given climatic and physical conditions.
- Any reference to the transportation of dangerous goods and spills prevention should connect to Drinking Water Source Protection plans as created under the *Clean Water Act*.

The NOMTS must express commitment to improving the transportation infrastructure and services in northern Ontario. This should be reflected in stronger language as succinct, meaningful and actionable goals.

Overall, the Draft Strategy represents a breadth of work that is overdue and has the potential to harness the great resources and can truly serve the citizens of northern Ontario. Planners will play a key role in the development of a multimodal transportation network. This cannot be done in isolation and must be inclusive of stakeholders in urban, rural, remote and Indigenous communities. The level of infrastructure and service delivery in northern Ontario shall strive for or exceed what is offered and considered as the norm in southern Ontario.

There are a concurrent set of challenges facing the Northern Ontario local government sector regarding long-term infrastructure planning and financing. Wherever possible, the investments of the Province should be dove-tailed with corresponding investments by communities wherever possible.

The NOMTS offers a unique opportunity to Northerners and planners to intervene with the Province as they commence significant transportation planning for our region. We look forward to the next steps involving action items.

OPPI supports the Province's efforts to improve Ontario's land use planning system. OPPI would welcome to further discuss this submission and answer any questions you may have. To further discuss our submission or to schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact me at 416-668-8469 or by email at l.ryan@ontarioplanners.ca

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ryan', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Loretta Ryan, RPP, CAE
Director, Public Affairs
Ontario Professional Planners Institute