



Chambre de commerce  
du Montréal métropolitain  
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

January 8, 2009

Mr. Qussai Samak  
Commission chair  
Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement  
575 Saint-Amable Street, Suite 2.10  
Québec, Quebec G1R 6A6

**Subject: Opinion of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal within the context of the consultation concerning the Eastern Train Project: Mascouche-Terrebonne-Repentigny line**

Dear Mr. Samak:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal was interested to learn of plans to put into service the Eastern Train, a new commuter train line serving eastern Montréal and the north-east sector of the metropolitan area, and we are pleased to forward our comments regarding this initiative of importance to Montréal.

The Board of Trade has some 7,000 members from the Greater Montréal business community. Its mission is to analyze and understand economic issues and to guide and promote appropriate initiatives in the field. It also supports the growth of its members' businesses with a full range of services and advances ideas promoting the full and healthy development of the metropolis, the 110,000 companies located there, and the 1.8 million workers who make it the economic engine of Quebec.

The goal of the project proposed by the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) is to improve regional public transit service in the east end of the metropolis. In addition to providing easier commuter access from the north belt to downtown Montréal, this infrastructure would also serve commuters from both Montréal and the north belt travelling to the many employment hubs along its route. The implementation of this public transit service would also ease rush hour traffic jams, thereby facilitating the transportation of goods along Highway 40.

In addition, the developer plans to use existing transportation infrastructure such as the railway tracks along almost half of the route and to take advantage of the railway right-of-way along Highway 640, on which new railroad tracks could be built.

Using existing infrastructure in this way would considerably reduce the project's environmental impact. It is nevertheless important to note that this project would require the construction of new infrastructure, some of which would pass through sensitive environments. The Board of Trade thus believes that while this public transit infrastructure project would promote the sustainable urban development of the metropolis, it would be important for the developer to choose the best possible solutions to minimize its impact on the sector's natural and built environment.

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The \$300 million required to carry out this project would not only generate significant economic spinoffs of all kinds, but would also make it possible to build new stations that would serve as levers for developing urban cores all along its route (Transit-Oriented Development, TOD), a significant consideration in line with the sustainable urban development of the metropolis. The Board of Trade believes this approach should systematically be taken into account in the development plans and planning programs of municipalities served by this new line. TOD makes it possible to increase the use of active transportation by locating stations near service areas and to efficiently serve employment hubs and residential areas.

Moreover, insofar as the uncertain economic conditions faced by the metropolis for the past several months require that development projects rapidly be launched to stimulate the economy, the Board of Trade welcomes the imminent implementation of this plan to create a sustainable transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, since transportation in the metropolitan area generates almost 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, such an initiative, promoting modal transfer from car to public transit use, is highly strategic.

It must be remembered, however, that the quality of the service offered is a key factor in such a transfer, and particular attention must be paid to the convenience and accessibility of the passenger service infrastructure. The Board of Trade thus believes that, by developing stations and park and ride facilities offering the best possible service to users, the AMT would create the conditions needed to compete effectively with the comfort of the automobile.

Within this context and with a view to assuming its role as an involved, responsible economic player, the Board of Trade wishes every success to this project. Not only would it promote the development of the entire east end of Montréal, but it would also benefit the economy of the entire metropolis.

Please be assured of the Board of Trade's full co-operation in contributing to the development of the metropolis.

Sincerely,

Roger Plamondon  
Acting president and CEO