

Electrify Georgetown line, Metrolinx staff recommend

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

Metrolinx staff is recommending to its board next week to move ahead with the electrification of the Georgetown GO and Lakeshore corridors, which when complete should cut commute time down for area GO train riders.

While electrification would shave some time off commutes (on average 2.4 and 2.8 minutes per passenger trip, longer trips would see journey time savings between 5 and 10 minutes), local riders won't see that benefit for several years as it will take that long before electrification of the line would be complete.

Staff is recommending the electrification be done in phases beginning with the Georgetown corridor Air Rail Link. The Metrolinx board is meeting next Wednesday to discuss the recommendation and if approved, make a recommendation to the Ontario Minister of Transportation.

"The staff recommendation is based on the transportation benefits associated with electrification," said Bruce McCuaig, president and CEO of Metrolinx. "These benefits include journey time savings for our customers and a reduction in operating costs. In addition, proceeding with the recommended option

for electrification is a significant step towards the Big Move's long term vision for Express Rail."

The goal of GO Express Rail Service is to provide even faster and more frequent service.

High ridership numbers and existing infrastructure improvements make the Lakeshore and Georgetown corridors the strongest candidate for electrification.

Electrifying the corridors would cost \$1.6 to \$1.8 billion, with a phased implementation. The first phase—the Air Rail Link—would be \$457 million.

If approved the preliminary design, engineering and environmental assessments would take three to four years.

Construction from Union Station to Pearson Airport (on the Georgetown line) and out to Willowbrook on Lakeshore West would take another four to six years. Electrifying the line to Brampton would take another two to three years, and longer to Georgetown.

To electrify the corridors would require six substations, four switching stations and four auto-transformer stations. In addition, four bridges would need to be rebuilt, and an additional 24 bridges would need to be reworked to allow for sufficient clearance of the overhead wires.

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