

Policy Summary

The scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) must be expanded to include alternatives to high-speed rail (HSR) and to other routes.

Addressing the problems of traffic congestion and high levels of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation is imperative in Ontario. Facilitating connections between Ontario's innovation hubs (Toronto, Kitchener, London and Windsor) is also critical to the province's growing knowledge-based economy. Improving passenger rail transportation through the southwestern Ontario corridor is therefore a reasonable objective, but should be pursued with caution.

HSR is unrealistic for Ontario, due to insufficient population on the proposed route: according to transportation analysts, North American HSR is feasible only where each metropolitan area being served is *at least 3 million*.

HSR thus poses serious economic risks, as well as social and environmental ones, including:

- projected costs (approximately \$4.8 billion) between Kitchener and London may be vastly underestimated and extremely costly to taxpayers;
- ridership is likely to be lower than anticipated, as tickets are to be regressively priced: 20% higher than current VIA Rail rates = \$78 per day for a commuter from London to Toronto; massive subsidies (at taxpayer expense) could be required to encourage use;
- carbon reductions could be much lower than anticipated without sufficient transition away from personal vehicle use;
- thousands of acres of Class 1 farmland would be lost, disastrously affecting farming families, rural businesses and communities — all of which contribute significantly to Ontario's innovation economy;
- HSR would weaken and ultimately cause the demise of VIA Rail, leaving smaller cities and towns on the Toronto–Windsor corridor without access to rail service of any kind.

Alternatives to HSR, such as enhanced VIA Rail, Go Trains, Regional Express Rail and utilizing existing railway right of ways, could mitigate these and other serious concerns.

With an investment of great magnitude, and with so many inherent risks, careful consideration should be given to all alternatives that could achieve the province's goals. The scope of the EA is currently limited to *only HSR* within or adjacent to the Hydro One corridor between Kitchener and London. **The scope of the EA must be expanded to include alternatives to HSR and to other routes.**

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