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CITY

Snubbing the suburbs

CRITICS DO THE MATH ON ROB FORD'S TRANSIT PLAN BY AVA BACCARI

Teferi Zemene spends 50 minutes each morning commuting from his home in the St. Clair and Kennedy area to his job near Union Station.

The fact that he does this all over again, heading in the opposite direction on his ride home is not what's irking the Scarborough resident—it's the reality that he has to tuck away his Metropass and reach for his car keys if he needs to travel anywhere in his neighbourhood.

"Once we get home, we have to drive," says Zemene, speaking at a press conference at City Hall Friday (April 1).

Zemene was among a group of local community members and leaders who crammed a City Hall press conference along with Jamie Kirkpatrick, transit campaigner for Toronto Environmental Alliance, to respond to the transit plan consummated by Mayor Rob Ford and provincial Premier Dalton McGuinty 24 hours earlier.

A number of angry constituents from immigrant communities in the suburbs gathered to call for a rational overhaul of the transit plan in order to create what they called a more sustainable transportation for a cash-strapped city (one that includes a hybrid of subway and light rail transit systems throughout the city).

The plan announced by McGuinty and Ford, they say, will contribute to the further "ghettoization" of the suburbs and minority communities outside the core.

That plan scraps former mayor David Miller's Transit City to create a 50-kilometre network of aboveground rail connecting poorer priority

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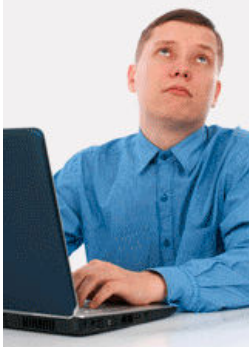
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neighbourhoods to the downtown core, and now pours nearly all of the \$8.4 billion of provincial money into the Eglinton Crosstown LRT underground. The section between Laird and Kennedy, where Eglinton widens, was slated to be aboveground under Transit City.

The city will incur the remaining \$4.2 billion price tag to extend the Sheppard subway West to Downsview and east from Don Mills to Kennedy, which the mayor says will be financed by a public-private partnership.

[See a map of the plan here.](#)

Zemene, who pays a subsidized cost for a transit pass as a union member of UNITE HERE Local 75, says the lack of TTC service near his home in Scarborough and areas north, leaves him with no choice but to drive when it comes to shopping, visiting friends and commuting locally.

“The mayor was elected for all of Toronto, but he didn’t consult us,” Zemene says. “[It’s] as if we don’t have feelings or ideas.”

Kirkpatrick says large portions of the city promised access to public transit under Transit City have been shafted under the Ford plan.

He says that the power shift that occurred during the election last fall doesn’t give the mayor a “carte blanche” to rip up the Transit City plan.

And yet that’s exactly what has happened, without a vote of council.

Eight city councillors have slammed the revamped plan, accusing the mayor of re-spending Transit City money, and adding that the city will now be forced to pay tens of millions of dollars in cancellation fees on the axed LRT line along Sheppard.

They doubted Ford’s promise that a subway line along Finch Avenue would be built in 10 years.

York Federation of Students’ Robert Cerjanec told the press conference that the LRT line that would have been built along Finch Avenue West under the old Transit City, would have helped the approximately 48,000 students who descend upon the campus on a daily basis.

And while the proposed extension of the Yonge-University-Spadina subway line will provide direct access to the university, students will have to wait until end of 2015 for that ride.

Surrounded by reporters, Mohammed El Rashidy of the Canadian Arab Federation, said the new transit plan not only “leaves out a lot of people that needed change,” in Scarborough, Jane and Finch, and pockets in the city’s west end – it contributes to the continued “ghettoization” of immigrant communities in the suburbs already caught in the widening gap between the rich and poor.

El Rashidy drives and takes public transit, and says he knows the feeling both of being halted to a stand-still in rush hour traffic and “packed like sardines” on streetcars.

“How many more years can we go on like this?” he asks, noting that as the population continues to grow, both our streets and public transit system will continue to swell with commuters.

Apr 3, 2011 at 12:53 PM

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**TeaPartyTO**

Drawing streetcar lines on a map doesn't mean it will happen.

Rob Ford is right: No way could Transit City be done the way it was planned with the budget allotted. Transit City, along with all the other variations (Sarah Thomson/Smitherman) of the TTC expansion would of incurred billions in 'unforseen' costs.

#1 rule of government spending, always double/triple the original estimated budget and there's your final tally.

Rob Ford's subway plans are realistic, reasonable and will come in on budget.

20 hours ago

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**wklis**

Rob Ford's phobia against surface rail should not direct the direction for transit in Toronto. The price of gasoline is going up (only goes down during a recession) because of rising crude oil prices, we need to be prepared. We need a hybrid of light rail and heavy rail, but to cancel Finch West now because of Rob's phobia will mean no help for transit users in that area of Toronto. Same in Scarborough east of the SCC.

1 hour ago in reply to TeaPartyTO

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<http://t.co/TWyrZEw>  
Sun Apr 03 2011 14:37

Impressive turnout for #SlutWalkTO <http://t.co/BqfXt14>  
Sun Apr 03 2011 14:24

Responding to @TOMayorFord's transit plan #Toronto  
<http://now.uz/dNMIGz>  
Sun Apr 03 2011 13:17

Jim Guthrie scores an iPad app <http://t.co/eAMwGVv>  
Sun Apr 03 2011 10:31

Is this your bike? Because it's going to get taken away.  
<http://now.uz/eNae211>



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
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