



# ERASING THE LINES

Seamless Fare Integration Across  
the Toronto Region

MARCH 2023





# A Call for Fare Integration

**T**he Toronto region needs fare integration and the time is now. Across the region, we are spending billions on new transit infrastructure but, without a fare system that's convenient, affordable and makes sense for riders, we won't be able to unlock the true potential of those investments.

We live in an integrated region in every way, with one glaring exception - our disconnected and fragmented transit system. In the face of a chronic labour shortage, employers are struggling to attract and retain talent from across the region. We need to end unfair fares so that we can increase ridership, provide better service, and fully utilize the infrastructure we've already built.

A well-integrated, sensible transit system is key to a stronger, more attractive region. People live, work and play across our region, and we need a fare system that recognizes that our lives today are not defined by lines on a map. For decades riders have voiced their frustrations with the burden of paying double fares when crossing municipal boundaries, the high cost of GO fares for trips within the City, and the fact that the fastest route is often not the cheapest one.

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**Peter travels from north Scarborough to downtown for work.** He could save 40 minutes each way by transferring from a TTC bus to the GO train instead of to the subway, but, like so many others, he's scared off because it would cost him \$10.82 instead of \$3.20.

**FROM SCARBOROUGH TO DOWNTOWN TORONTO (TTC + GO) - 2 ZONES**

**TODAY: \$10.82  
TOMORROW: \$3.20**

## A Zone-Based Fare System

The Board recommends unifying fare systems across the region, including TTC, GO Transit, and local transit agencies by charging by zone – distance travelled – instead of by municipality. Zones would reflect current transit boundaries, and Toronto users would retain their current flat citywide fare. GO trains and busses would also fall under the new fare system, making GO transit more affordable and unlocking underutilized routes while relieving overcrowded TTC lines. In short, riders will finally be able to use the region's transit system as a true network, tapping on and off any transit vehicle in the Toronto region, confident that their fare will be based on a simple, unified structure.

## Investing in Our Investments

This transformation will have a cost, but a reasonable one that will pay for itself over time in increased ridership, decreased traffic congestion and reduced emissions across the region. The Board estimates this proposal will cost \$154 million annually in forgone fare revenues across different networks, which would need to be subsidized by the province. To make this possible, transit agencies and regional stakeholders will also need to work together to create a fair and transparent accounting system to divvy up revenues and subsidies across the new integrated fare system. They will need to coordinate their fares and work to better coordinate services, but transit agencies will retain full autonomy, ensuring local contexts remain visible to decision makers. This new model will vastly improve rider satisfaction, draw new ridership, and enable fare equity for all Torontonians.

**“Riders will finally be able to use the region's transit system as a true network, tapping on and off any transit vehicle in the Toronto region, confident that their fare will be based on a simple, unified structure.”**



# Why We Need Fare Integration Now



## Maximize Value of Transit Investment

We won't maximize the value of these investments if fare policies force riders onto or off of transit entirely. For example, the new subways will have fewer riders if they have to pay a double fare to switch from a local bus onto the TTC.



## Expand Employer Access to Talent and Worker Access to Jobs

In a survey of businesses in the economic zone around Pearson Airport, they highlighted that workers' trips to their jobs are the number one impediment to their business. This makes our economy less efficient and hampers our competitiveness.



## Improve Quality of Life

A fare policy that allows riders to use GO Transit as part of their journey could reduce travel times by as much as 50%. This means more time at home, better access to affordable housing, and faster trips to any one of the region's thousands of social, cultural, entertainment and sports destinations.



## Address Equity

Those most burdened with unreasonably high fares are the disproportionately marginalized communities living at the outer edge of the

City of Toronto. These residents are locked out of job opportunities and services in the regions just beyond municipal boundaries by double fares for trips outside the TTC service area, and by the high price of faster commutes on GO transit.



## Reduce Emissions

Transportation is the region's top source of emissions, and fare integration could attract thousands of new riders to transit, making a meaningful dent in our region's transition toward net zero.



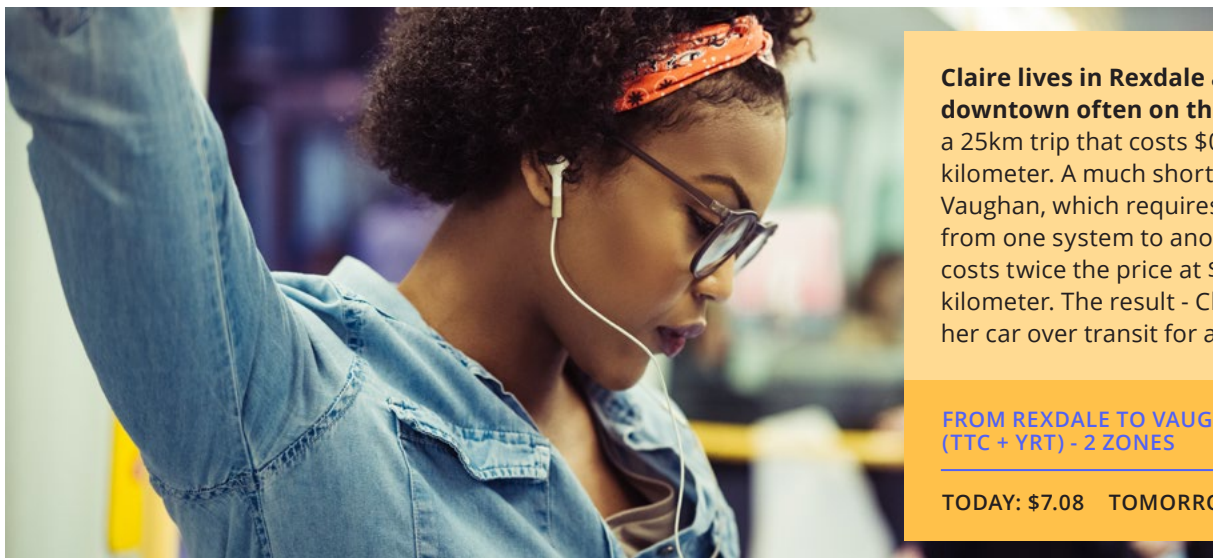
## Cut Through Congestion

There are many people who would consider a transit journey but punitive double fares make driving more affordable. Fare integration can get thousands of cars off our roads, helping to ease chronic road congestion for those who have no alternative but to drive, including economically vital goods deliveries.



## Restore Ridership

Many of our transit routes are running below capacity as a result of the pandemic. Fare integration is the best way to quickly attract riders back to transit and revitalize our commercial districts.



**Claire lives in Rexdale and travels downtown often on the TTC,** a 25km trip that costs \$0.13 per kilometer. A much shorter trip to Vaughan, which requires a transfer from one system to another, costs twice the price at \$1.77 per kilometer. The result - Claire chooses her car over transit for a shorter trip.

**FROM REXDALE TO VAUGHAN  
(TTC + YRT) - 2 ZONES**

**TODAY: \$7.08   TOMORROW: \$3.20**

# How It Works

As a rider, the new fare structure would be much simpler than today. It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3:

1.

Tap on to the subway, bus, or GO Train. The system automatically determines your starting zone. **You always get to ride two zones for the price of one.**
2.

Take the quickest route possible to your destination. Whether you’re on the subway, bus, or GO Train, the price is always the same. You can stop along the way, as the time allowed for your time transfer is extended based on the number of zones.
3.

Tap off at the end of your journey. The system automatically calculates how many zones you passed through, and charges you the correct price.

Charging for two zones as the minimum fare also means that for many riders, like people taking the TTC within the City of Toronto, there is no change from today.

## BENEFITS OF A ZONE-BASED FARE STRUCTURE

GO and TTC fares are the same or lower than today

Trips within Toronto retain single flat fare (now an A-B zone ticket)

Easy to use and understand, based on municipal boundaries

Double fare for short cross-boundary trips is eliminated

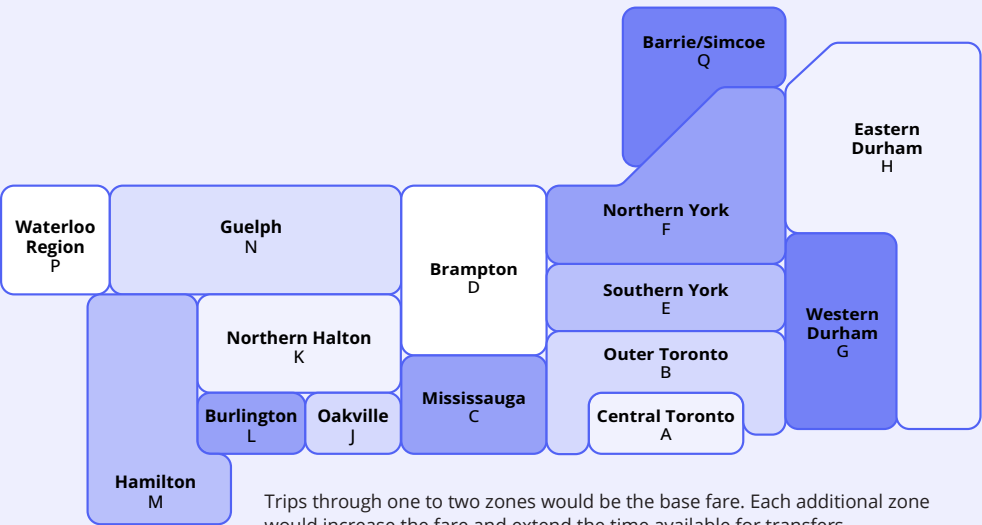
Long-distance trips pay similar fares to today to minimize revenue loss

GO Transit is included in fare system, maximizing utilization of its infrastructure and shortening trips for thousands of riders per day

## Proposed Toronto Fare Calculator

1-2 ZONES	\$3.20
3 ZONES	\$5.70
4 ZONES	\$7.70
5 ZONES	\$9.70
6 ZONES	\$11.70
7 ZONES	\$13.70
8 ZONES	\$15.20

\* Zone M fare: \$2.60



Trips through one to two zones would be the base fare. Each additional zone would increase the fare and extend the time available for transfers.

Creating different fares for individual zone pairs (or single-zone fares for outer areas like Hamilton and Waterloo Region) is feasible if local agencies desire additional fare-setting flexibility.

## Guiding Principles



### Mode Neutrality

Transit is a network. That means that people need to be able to use different modes to complete their journeys most efficiently. Poorer people shouldn't be relegated to slower modes. A transfer is an inconvenience—you shouldn't have to pay more for it.



### Boundary Invisibility

A rider making a trip of a similar distance should not pay more than another rider just because they are crossing a municipal or agency boundary.



### Equity

People should not be denied access to jobs and services because they can't afford a fare.



### Legibility

A transit system should be easy to use and understand—even for people who've never ridden before.

**Arlene takes the trip from Rexdale to Toronto Metropolitan University** several times a week for school, taking both the TTC and GO. She pays \$7.96 each way, even though she never leaves Toronto. With fare integration, she would be able to make that trip for just \$3.20.

FROM REXDALE TO TMU (TTC + GO) - 2 ZONES

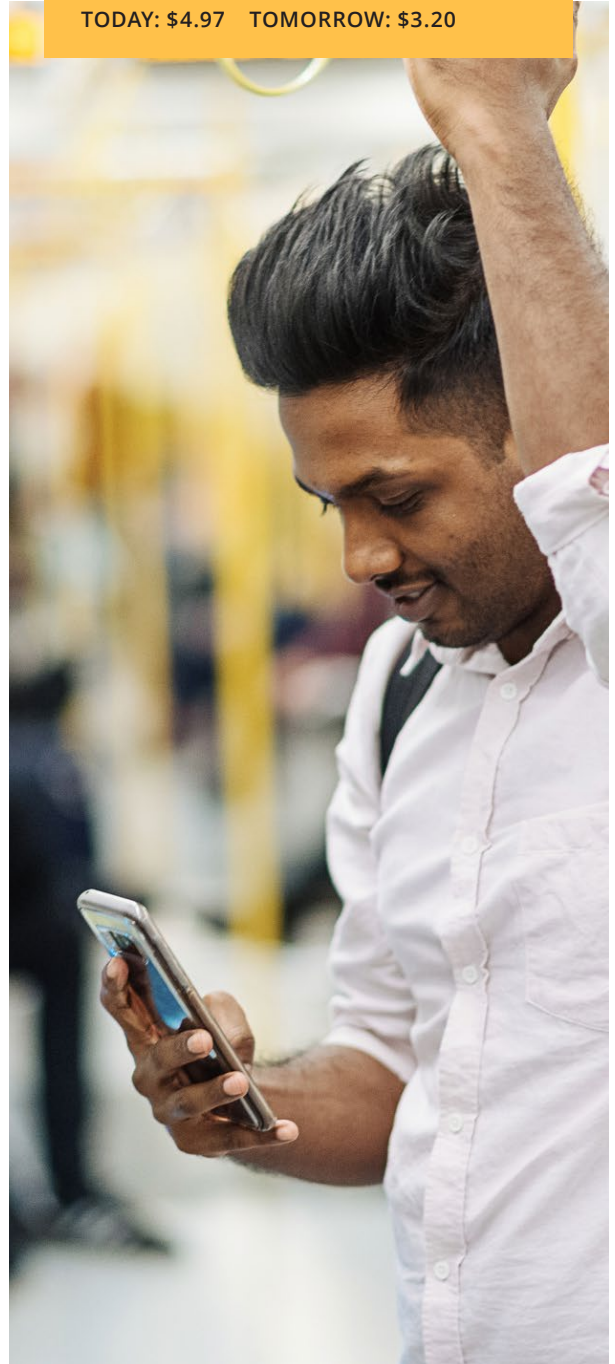
TODAY: \$7.96 TOMORROW: \$3.20



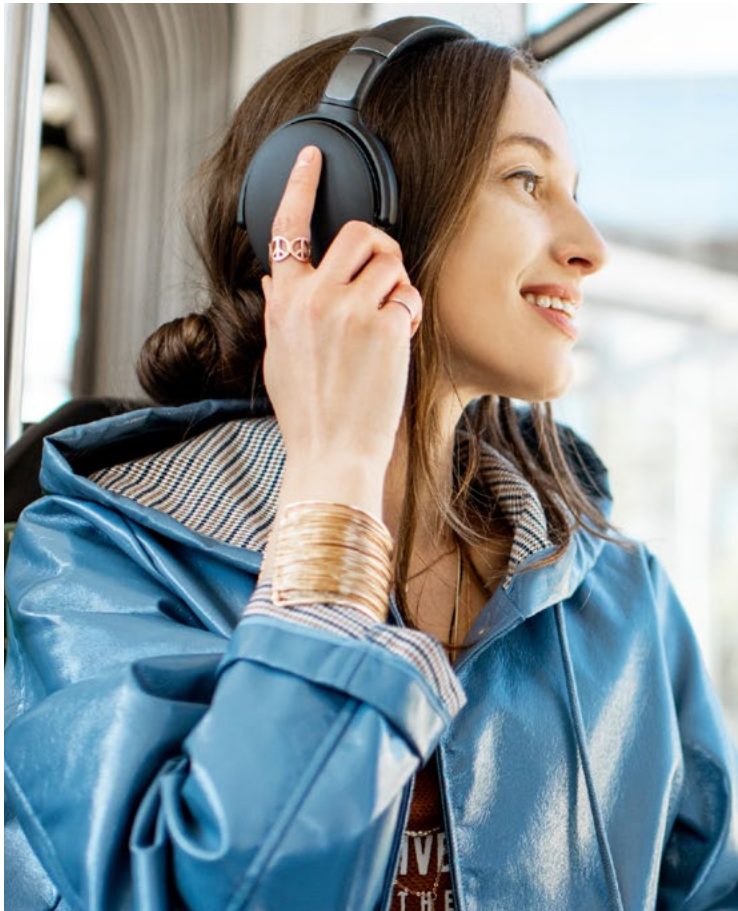
**Rishi works at the GM plant in Oshawa but lives in Pickering.** Even though he is staying in Durham Region, the fastest route involves both the DRT and GO Transit, meaning he pays a premium. If fares were integrated, he would be paying \$3.20 instead of the \$4.97 he pays now.

FROM PICKERING TO OSHAWA  
(DRT + GO) - 2 ZONES

TODAY: \$4.97 TOMORROW: \$3.20







**Laura takes transit instead of her car to the Eaton Centre from Burlington**, first taking the GO train then transferring to the subway in Toronto, paying a total of \$13.55 for the two separate fares. The hassle of paying the extra fare, along with the cost itself, often makes it feel like her car is the better option. Under one fare, that trip would be reduced to \$9.70, incentivizing Laura to leave her car in Burlington.

**FROM BURLINGTON GO TO THE EATON CENTRE  
(GO + TTC) - 5 ZONES**

**TODAY: \$13.55   TOMORROW: \$9.70**

## What It Will Cost

REDUCTION OF FARES ON SHORT CROSS-BOUNDARY  
TRIPS BETWEEN TTC AND 905 MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS

**\$34 million**

+

FREE TRANSFER BETWEEN GO TRANSIT AND TTC

**\$45 million**

+

REDUCTION IN GO TRANSIT FARES

**\$75 million**

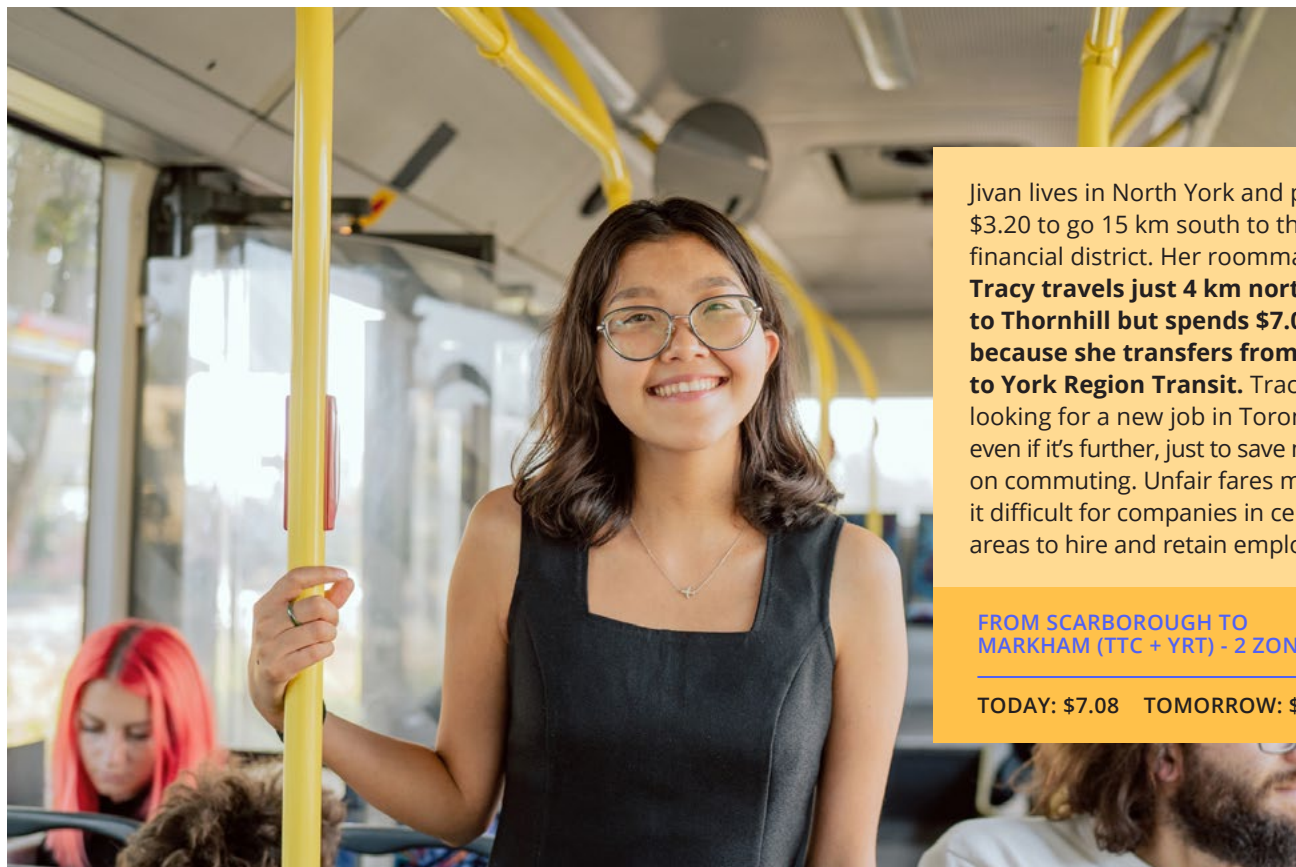
ESTIMATED MAXIMUM FIRST-YEAR COST

**\$154 million** Total is less than 1/3  
of Metrolinx subsidy

This is a ballpark cost that does not take into account the potentially large additional revenue from new riders and the major efficiency gains from shifting riders off crowded services and onto less crowded (but currently more expensive) services.

## Why We Need a Comprehensive Plan

Bilateral approaches to fare integration between agencies continue to leave gaps that are confusing for riders and simply shift rather than eliminate barriers. Dozens of bilateral fare agreements between agencies add administrative complexity and expense. They are also considerably more expensive, because they do not target fare cuts for those who need them most—short-distance cross boundary riders—as the Board’s plan does. Any fare plan that simply involves recognition of other agencies’ transfers will not be able to integrate GO Transit, because a flat GO fare across the region will never be feasible. It also ignores the most transit-dependent population, who prefer to use passes. Comprehensive integration is better for riders and more affordable for governments.



Jivan lives in North York and pays \$3.20 to go 15 km south to the financial district. Her roommate **Tracy travels just 4 km north to Thornhill but spends \$7.08 because she transfers from TTC to York Region Transit.** Tracy is looking for a new job in Toronto, even if it's further, just to save money on commuting. Unfair fares make it difficult for companies in certain areas to hire and retain employees.

**FROM SCARBOROUGH TO  
MARKHAM (TTC + YRT) - 2 ZONES**

**TODAY: \$7.08   TOMORROW: \$3.20**

## Conclusion

“Fare integration doesn’t take years like building a new subway line. It can be done in a matter of months, once we make the decision to do it.”

**T**hese reforms are more urgent than ever as the region recovers from the pandemic. Conventional sources of transit revenue have been dramatically disrupted. We have the opportunity to use these historic challenges as a catalyst for long-discussed change, that results in more convenient transit for millions of people across the region. Transit networks will have better utilization of existing and new transit services and infrastructure, as users will not need to take longer and more circuitous journeys to pay a lower fare. It will finally mean fairness for people in areas like Rexdale, Malvern, Malton, and Pickering, who will no longer face punitive double fares to travel a short distance across a municipal boundary to major employment areas. People in places like Weston and Agincourt will no longer contribute to crowding on the subway, and can instead get downtown in half the time on GO.

Fare integration doesn’t take years like building a new subway line. It can be done in a matter of months, once we make the decision to do it. That makes it the fastest way we can meaningfully improve the lives of transit riders across the region. With the support of the provincial government and partnership of municipalities, we can break the logjam that has endured for decades. Fare integration will make our region more prosperous, fairer, and more environmentally sustainable. The time for action is now.





The Toronto Region Board of Trade is one of the largest and most influential chambers of commerce in North America and is a catalyst for the region's economic growth agenda. Backed by more than 11,500 members, we pursue policy change to drive the growth and competitiveness of the Toronto region, and facilitate market opportunities with programs, partnerships and connections to help our members succeed – domestically and internationally.

For more on making Toronto one of the most competitive and sought-after business regions in the world, visit [bot.com](http://bot.com) and follow us at [@TorontoRBOT](https://twitter.com/TorontoRBOT).