

Sir,

I am presenting this brief for Sauvons la falaise, an environmental group based in Montreal. This group seeks to preserve the few remaining green spaces on Montreal Island as parks. We do support spending on public transit and do support the electrification of transport, but feel compelled to speak out against the REM train.

It is worth remembering that the REM was conceived behind closed doors without consideration for existing plans for urban development, land use plans, or the planning of different transport agencies. The plan for the REM literally came out of left field and is now being marketed as a *fait d'accompli*.

The cardinal rule for public transit planning is to put the metro or train lines through areas of high population density. Unfortunately, Law 38—a very bad law-- has turned that upside down, causing the Caisse to put the REM train through areas where few people are living, hoping to profit from the real estate development and property taxes accrued from building around its stations.

There are many reasons why public transit should be built in areas of high population density, but I will speak only about environmental reasons. Building instead on the few remaining green spaces on Montreal Island is contrary to the stated objectives of the Agglomeration Council. It is also an attack on the habitat of endangered species such as the Least Bittern/Petit Blongio.

Well-designed public transit invariably reduces the use of private automobiles. However, the REM, with its four new incentive parking lots--including one for 3,000 vehicles at the Rive-Sud station--will encourage the use of automobiles and of urban sprawl. Thanks to the REM, housing developments will spring up far from downtown with multiple automobiles per household. In 2016, this is the exact opposite of what our public policy should be.

The Caisse trumpets an expected decrease in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) of 17,000 tons/year from the REM. This is primarily because the train would replace diesel buses on the

Champlain Bridge. What they don't tell us is that the construction of the REM would require massive amounts of cement, which will negate any possible GHG savings for perhaps 70 years, likely more than the lifetime of the system. Beyond this, the urban sprawl caused by the REM will also massively increase emissions of GHGs. Given this, it is essential that the REM does not receive one penny from Quebec's Fonds Vert.

I believe it is six Quebec ministries which have clearly pronounced that the REM's impact study is incomplete and/or inadmissible. For any other project, such pronouncements would have delayed the evaluation process. How is it possible that the REM is nonetheless being debated before the BAPE, and being fast-tracked?

I am frankly amazed that the REM is being considered before this BAPE. Many aspects of the project remain far too nebulous for there to be much meaningful debate. The Caisse is not telling us how much the ticket fares will be on the REM; they're not even revealing what their expected rate of return is on their estimated \$3.5 billion investment. Nor does the Caisse compare the REM to any alternative plans, such as Option Transport Durable's Grand Virage plan for tramways and metro extensions that could move three times as many passengers as the REM, and do so at lower cost.

Mr President, the REM plan as presented by the Caisse is a bad joke. I hope that your recommendations convey this same message to our government. Thank you.

John Symon  
of Lachine, QC  
for Sauvons la falaise