

Brief submitted to

**Bureau d'audiences publiques sur
l'environnement**

sur le

**Projet de réseau électrique métropolitain
de transport collectif**

presented by Sue Stacho

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I have lived in the borough of Pierrefonds-Roxboro for 24 years and I have benefited from using the Deux Montagnes train as a fast and cost effective means to get downtown. While busing in the west island is available, it is not as efficient as the train for downtown trips. With the proposed changes to this train line to make way for the new REM technology, I am concerned about the absence of service during the construction period. I am also extremely worried about fares, and the lack of this important information is troubling. How can the Caisse de Depot et Placements present a plan for such an expensive public transit project without knowing or sharing with the public the costs per rider?

Improving the Deux Montagnes line could be done in a much more cost effective, efficient manner by simply adding more cars or double-deckers cars during peak periods and reducing the number of cars during off-peak times. In fact, according to the article 'AMT ordering 24 new double-decker train cars' Montreal Gazette, Mar 3, 2016, this has been proposed as a viable solution to the overcrowding during peak periods.

The tunnel planned for the airport-arm of the train is near a very sensitive wetland and active bird habitat and needs be subjected to intense environmental impact studies by impartial professionals in order to mitigate any damage to this natural area.

The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a reality for all cities and Montreal has set targets for reducing emissions by 30% by 2020. Getting people to leave their cars at home and to use public transportation for the daily commute is one of the most effective ways to reduce greenhouse gases. As a car dependent society, suburban Montrealers are reluctant to get out of their cars unless a very user-friendly alternative is available. Trains, metros and buses must be within a short walk or bike ride from our homes if we are to change. With the REM project, many of the stations are not close to residences, and will encourage driving to the stations, but, if parking is inadequate, drivers are likely to forego good intentions and drive the entire route to work.

In addition, the REM trajectory, as proposed does not target boroughs with the highest populations. In contrast, the Ste Anne de Bellevue, Kirkland and Brossard stations will be placed in areas where the population has increased less than 2% in recent years, whereas rapidly growing areas like Vaudreuil-Dorion, which has seen its population grow by 29%, and Laval, with an increase of almost 10%, are not served at all by this project. The plan to install stations in areas that are not yet fully developed leads one to wonder why these locations were chosen. The risk of losing the last remaining natural spaces in Kirkland, Ste Anne de Bellevue and the south shore to development is a very real threat and must be off the table as a means of recuperating the funds invested in this train project. Mayor Coderre MUST honor his commitment to protecting 10% of the island as green space.

While many cities are changing their urban plans to reduce urban sprawl, Montreal continues to build in outlying areas far from the city center. This outdated and unsustainable approach to development leads to a continual degradation of our natural spaces and encourages car dependency. The REM stations in Kirkland and Ste Anne de Bellevue are presented as an

improvement to the currently unsuitable public transit system, when, in fact, their very presence will justify development of these important natural areas. The loss of natural areas to urban sprawl must be stopped before it is all gone and the REM project, as proposed, will provide our elected officials justification to create new neighborhoods rather than densify existing ones.

The long awaited and promised extension of the metro to Anjou is needed to serve the populations in East Montreal where many more people per household use public transportation than in other area of the island but again, the REM does not have any plans to venture east of downtown. Will this exorbitant project use up all available funds that could be better used on metro extensions and improvements to existing commuter train lines?

In conclusion, I feel that the REM project, as presented;

- will provide municipal governments with an incentive to build in natural areas like l'Anse-à-l'Orme near the proposed Kirkland station, and the south shore if the Brossard station is built. To avoid more urban sprawl the Coderre administration **MUST** meet their goal of 10% green space on island by securing the last remaining unprotected natural areas from development.
- is too expensive, and should be subjected to a rigorous and thorough UPAC investigation to mete out any possible corruption and bid-rigging
- does not reach enough densely populated areas. Anjou, Laval and Vaudreuil need to be part of a new public transit plan if Montreal is to claim itself as a model city of public transportation. To get enough cars off the roads and make a real difference in green house gas emissions, the new train must be affordable, and located in densely populated areas that are well served with connector buses and metro stations.
- is not the best technology for a better public transit system, (better options *have* been proposed)
- has too many unanswered questions to be accepted in such a short time period and should therefore be subjected to many more public hearings and a longer time-line for completion.
- should be rejected by our municipal, provincial and federal governments as it is presented and redesigned in collaboration with transit experts, sociologists, environmentalists and economists.

Thank you

Sue Stacho

