



Mémoire de la Coalition Verte

Réseau électrique métropolitain de Montréal (REM)

26 septembre 2016

Rédaction et présentation:

Avrom David Shtern

Porte-parole - TRANSPORTATION

Coalition Verte

Affiliations:

Partenaires du Parc Écologique de l'Archipel de Montréal (PPÉAM)

Membre du Mouvement Ceinture Verte

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

INTRODUCTION

Les stratégies de la Coalition Verte pour un réseau intégré et intermodal de transport en commun
Le Système léger sur rail de l'Antenne Doney, pierre angulaire des stratégies de la Coalition Verte
Promouvoir le Système léger sur rail de l'Antenne Doney
Le modèle de l'Antenne Doney est transférable et applicable au Montréal métropolitain en entier.
REM est un hybride et non pas un réel Système léger sur rail

AVONS-NOUS BESOIN DU REM, UN SKYTRAIN DE VANCOUVER, ICI, À MONTRÉAL?

Coûts

L'amortissement

Impact

AU CHOIX

Enfin, l'utilité

CONCLUSION

Le SkyTrain de Vancouver, ici, à Montréal? NON MERCI !

La Coalition Verte s'oppose au projet du réseau électrique métropolitain de Montréal (REM)

La Coalition Verte soutient un réseau intégré et intermodal de trans-train, SLRs, tramways, métros, trains de banlieue et autobus dans toute la région métropolitaine.

* * * * *

ANNEX (a): Other Issues and Questions

ANNEX (b): Background article - Tremblay's rail plan off track, critics say - Gyulai, The Gazette, 2007

RÉFÉRENCE

Diagramme: : «*COST COMPARISONS*»

Rappel historique: *Coalition Verte, 1988 – 2013, 25^e anniversaire*

Mémoire de la Coalition Verte

Réseau électrique métropolitain de Montréal (REM)

INTRODUCTION

Les stratégies de la Coalition Verte pour un réseau intégré et intermodal de transport en commun

La Coalition Verte, fondée en 1988 par des bénévoles, est une association à but non lucratif. Ses membres et les groupes associés sont dévoués à la conservation, la protection et la restauration de l'environnement. La motivation permanente de la Coalition Verte est la protection des espaces naturels sur l'île de Montréal et le sud-ouest du Québec. Cependant, il a longtemps déjà que la Coalition Verte a développé des stratégies pour le transport en commun qui inciteraient les banlieusards à abandonner leurs voitures, qui promouvraient la réduction des gaz à effet de serre et décourageraient la construction de nouvelles routes à travers les écosystèmes et les milieux naturels.

Le Système léger sur rail de l'Antenne Doney, pierre angulaire des stratégies de la Coalition Verte

Depuis 1989, la Coalition Verte a encouragé l'adoption du train léger classique sur l'Antenne Doney pour assurer une liaison rapide Système léger sur rail (SLR) ou tram-train du coeur de l'Ouest de l'île au centre-ville de Montréal. Comme proposé, le service de l'Antenne Doney circulerait au niveau du sol et serait entièrement intégré et relié au système de métro à la future station du terminus Bois-Franc. Une bonne partie de la voie ferrée originale de l'ancienne Antenne entre la station Bois-Franc à Saint-Laurent et l'avenue Stillview à Pointe-Claire existe encore, parallèle à l'autoroute 40, au sud de celle-ci.

Promouvoir le Système léger sur rail de l'Antenne Doney

Les militants pour le transport public à la Coalition Verte ont fait la promotion de l'Antenne Doney au cours de débats publics, des réunions des municipalités et des rencontres avec des élus. De nombreux citoyens, ainsi que des dirigeants politiques et communautaires ont participé à des événements "Walk the Line" (marcher sur les rails)! Le service de ce Train léger peut contribuer à développer le transport en commun, à offrir une alternative plus agréable aux automobilistes de banlieue, et à alléger le trafic sur l'autoroute 40. Le service Antenne Doney pourrait avoir un effet considérable sur le développement d'un "centre-ville" de l'ouest, et de son commerce. Desservant les banlieues en essor de l'Ouest de l'île, les gares le long de l'Antenne Doney pourraient assurer l'accès à l'Hôpital général Lakeshore, au centre Fairview, au Technoparc Saint-Laurent, etc.

Le modèle de l'Antenne Doney est transférable et applicable au Montréal métropolitain en entier.

Ce modèle de train léger est flexible, rentable et facile d'accès. Il a été adopté dans plusieurs cadres urbains de par le monde. Compatible avec d'autres modes de transport - rail, métro, autobus - est et ouest - le modèle Antenne Doney est transmissible et applicable au Montréal métropolitain.

REM est un hybride et non pas un réel Système léger sur rail

REM est rigidement confiné à sa propre voie bétonnée, ses wagons plus pesants que le SLR et il devra être séparé à niveau ou clôturé. Le REM a été faussement décrit par certain media comme "léger". Il ne l'est pas. C'est un "léger" train métropolitain avec plusieurs superstructures élevées. Donc, nous devons nous poser la question: Avons-nous besoin d'un train REM, un Skytrain de Vancouver, ici, à Montréal?

AVONS-NOUS BESOIN D'UN SKYTRAIN DE VANCOUVER, ICI, À MONTRÉAL?

Le 22 avril 2016, La Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec a annoncé un investissement de notre fonds de pension public de 5,5 milliards \$ dans un projet de transport automatisé, connu sous Le Réseau électrique métropolitain (REM) de Montréal. Pour compenser les coûts en capital, des contributions de l'ordre de 3 à 4 milliards \$ sont attendues des gouvernements du Québec et du Canada. Les dépassements de coûts sont inévitables.

La Caisse entend utiliser nos épargnes pour construire 67 kilomètres de lignes ferroviaires s'étendant de Brossard à Deux-Montagnes, dont un embranchement vers l'Aéroport Trudeau, pour s'enligner à nouveau le long de l'autoroute 40, vers le centre commercial Fairview Pointe-Claire et Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue.

Un tel investissement de capital public est mal avisé pour des questions de coûts, d'impact et d'utilité.

Coûts : Un chemin de fer du type SkyTrain/REM implique un tracé en béton et une structure souvent élevée, parfois intubée, ce qui le rend incompatible à quelque mode de transport existant à Montréal.

Un Train léger sur rail, un Tram-Train ou un SLR (Système léger sur rail) comporte plus de flexibilité pour opérer dans les emprises dédiées. Les SLRs de grande capacité et les Tram-Trains sont de beaucoup plus efficaces en matières de coûts de construction, d'exploitation et d'entretien.

Le SLR de Calgary a coûté 15 millions \$ du kilomètre pour sa construction, comparativement à 86,9 millions \$ du kilomètre pour le SkyTrain de Vancouver. Le coût de construction d'un REM serait d'au moins 5 fois plus élevé.

Les frais annuels d'opération du SRL de Calgary sont de 0,27 \$ par passager, (2006), comparativement à 3,92 \$ pour le SkyTrain de Vancouver (2013).

La navette entre Toronto et Pearson, l'Union Pearson Express (UPEX), promue comme une entreprise rentable, tout comme le REM de Montréal, a lamentablement échoué. Les dépenses excédentaires d'UPEX obligent les contribuables à payer une somme additionnelle de 46,00\$ pour chaque passager. Et, malgré une réduction des tarifs et l'augmentation du nombre d'usagers, le volume entraîne un coût global plus élevé pour le trésor public.

L'amortissement : Lors du démantèlement de l'Échangeur Turcot, d'autres structures lourdes de béton pour rails s'élèveront. Dans le futur, alors que le REM montrera des signes d'âge et d'usure, à l'image des actuelles structures de Turcot, les filets de sécurité en acier et les échaffaudages permanents seront –ils monnaie courante?

La sécurité du tunnel sous le Mont-Royal constitue un autre problème nécessitant une discussion sérieuse.

Impact : Pourtant, la Caisse jure faire un profit, comptant en partie sur la vente des excédents de terrains expropriés, voués à de nouvelles constructions en hauteur le long du tracé. Il est plus que probable que des propriétés à proximité seront construites bien avant celles de la Caisse, à moins que les prix demandés ne soient compétitifs et actualisés. Le tracé-même s'avère un cadeau pour tout spéculateur immobilier dans l'Ouest-de-l'Île et ailleurs. La spéculation entraîne l'étalement urbain et la mise en péril de bâtiments patrimoniaux.

Le tracé est une menace pour les terres agricoles, les bassins versants du Parc-nature des Sources et du Technoparc Saint-Laurent et les milieux naturels, tels le Bois-de-Saraguay, le Bois-de-Liesse et les Rapides du Cheval Blanc, fragmentant de plus les prés et les bois de l'Anse-à-l'Orme.

La technologie retenue est coûteuse, offre peu de gares et exige d'énormes parcs de stationnement.

Autant de questions qui font montre d'une planification improvisée et d'importants coûts pour les contribuables.

Le REM est ni inclusif, ni équitable. Son tracé divise les zones du territoire urbain, établissant l'ouest de Montréal contre l'est, ce dernier étant exclu du projet de la Caisse. Il ne s'intègre pas davantage aux systèmes existants. Tout comme le Big Dig de Boston, le coût énorme du REM retardera pendant des années tous les autres projets de transport.

AU CHOIX :

Enfin, l'utilité : Selon le tracé planifié, le temps de déplacement entre l'aéroport et le centre-ville sera plus long. En effet, sur la ligne Vaudreuil-Hudson, la liaison centre-ville/aéroport est plus courte et de 15 minutes plus rapide. Elle dessert mieux le Super hôpital McGill, les écoles à NDG, Westmount et Montréal-Ouest. La ligne Vaudreuil-Hudson sera atrophiée, étant concurrentielle à la nouvelle ligne REM. Aucune gare n'est prévue pour l'Hôpital Lakeshore, pour les Collèges John Abbott ou McDonald. NDG et Lachine sont exclus du REM. À l'Antenne Doney, disparaîtra le service de fret ferroviaire, entraînant plus de camions sur les routes.

La cohabitation des différentes technologies de chemin de fer est peu probable : gabarits, tailles de piste, complexes de commutations et systèmes électriques. Les trains relativement nouveaux de la ligne Deux-Montagnes seront remplacés avant d'atteindre leur durée de vie.

Le Train de l'Est sera tronqué et le détournement attendu de la ligne AMT de Saint-Jérôme à la Gare centrale sera annulé. Les futurs trains haute vitesse ne seront pas en mesure d'utiliser le Tunnel sous le Mont-Royal. Enfin, le REM offrira de mauvaises liaisons avec le métro.

Ce plan est improvisé. Il représente un risque élevé pour les contribuables. Nous ne devons pas permettre à la Caisse de déterminer l'avenir du transport en commun urbain, le Québec se soustrayant à sa responsabilité et à son autorité. Les citoyens informés ont droit à une réelle consultation.

CONCLUSION:

Le SkyTrain de Vancouver, ici, à Montréal? NON MERCI !

La Coalition Verte s'oppose au projet du réseau électrique métropolitain de Montreal (REM)

Ce plan est improvisé et destructif.

La Coalition Verte s'oppose de même au tracé du REM vers l'aéroport, qui utilise à son avantage le potentiel existant du transport en commun local de l'Antenne Doney. Le REM sabote également la vision et les espoirs de la création d'un Grand-parc national à l'Anse-à-l'Orme et des parcs-nature adjacents le long du Lac des Deux-Montagnes. Il menace d'éroder notre patrimoine naturel et de gaspiller les millions de nos taxes déjà investis dans l'établissement de notre réseau de parcs-nature.

L'ampleur et l'échelle du REM impliquent un risque accru à notre capital financier et social et surtout un prix exagéré à notre capital environnemental. Ces problèmes sont étroitement liés dans leur ensemble. Notre environnement naturel, nos fonds et plans de retraite et nos voies ferrées existantes sont en péril.

Cependant, un moyen de transport en commun alternatif est nécessaire, non seulement pour l'Ouest de l'île mais pour le Montréal métropolitain en entier étant donné qu'un nombre aberrant d'automobiles circulant sur nos autoroutes aux heures de pointe n'ont qu'un seul passager: le chauffeur !

La Coalition Verte soutient un réseau intégré et intermodal de trams-train, SLRs, tramways, métros, trains de banlieue et autobus dans toute la région métropolitaine. Une "...proposition de longue date des environnementalistes de la Coalition Verte pour la création d'un train léger, rapide et fréquent qui desservirait l'Ouest de l'île en utilisant l'ancienne ligne industrielle appelée Antenne Doney ..." tient toujours. Le service léger Doney serait relié au train électrique Deux Montagnes et à la prolongation prévue de la ligne orange du métro à Bois-Franc. De même, l'alternative du train léger Antenne Doney au REM offrirait la possibilité d'une gare Technoparc Saint-Laurent.

REM représente un risque élevé pour les contribuables. Nous ne devons pas permettre à la Caisse de déterminer l'avenir du transport en commun urbain, le Québec se soustrayant à sa responsabilité et à son autorité. Les citoyens informés ont droit à une réelle consultation.

* * * * *

ANNEX (a): Other Issues and Questions:

Since the late 1970s, Montreal area suburban or commuter trains have been threatened. CN and CP were struggling to reinvent themselves as government had built a competitive publicly funded highway and airway system that undercut the mainly privately funded railways. Quebec did not want to take responsibility for passenger rail. But it did so reluctantly under the first PQ government. Quebec recognized the value of the Rigaud and Two Mountains train lines. It also wanted to integrate the other three line, (Ste-Therese, Farnham and Ste-Hilaire), but could not come to an agreement with the railways on time.

THE MOVEMENT FOR RAIL TRANSPORT came from grass roots organizations similar to ours that had encouraged the government to act in a positive light. The impetus was from civil society, from the bottom upwards to the top, and so it was a bottom-to-top policy. By the mid 1990s, the Two Mountains line was restored to its former glory and almost 31,000 passengers now ride it daily with the promise of more if the rolling stock were upgraded to bi-levels.

However, in the case of the REM, we have the retrograde scenario: Top-to-bottom. Government is deciding in a patronizing way what is best for Montreal. The REM was not the train that riders were asking for. The request from citizens consisted of major improvements to the railway line along the CPR paralleling Highway 20 and the St. Jacques Escarpment, and that concept caught people's imagination. I, among many, was involved in collecting signatures for a petition for the Charest government to act. And it did. It promised a modeling and engineering study of the CP line. Alas, politics got in the way.

Today we are faced with countless questions and issues why the REM is not the way to go.

- **1. Pensions**

The Caisse has been entrusted to protect and enhance Quebec public pensions. However, the REM will most likely lose money as do most transit systems worldwide. The Pearson Express in Toronto was touted as a for profit service. It is not.

Why are we using public pension money to build a transport system that will inherently lose money? Why are we risking our legacy funds for such a risky venture? The UK had to renationalize its rail and subway PPPs. Why do we think that it could work here?

The Caisse has expertise in banking and investment. Does it have the wisdom and knowledge base to build, procure and operate transit systems? Or will it come crying back to the government for more taxpayer handouts down the road?

In a 2013 Rollingstone article about the looting of public funds:

“All across America, Wall Street is grabbing money meant for public workers.”

[<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/looting-the-pension-funds-20130926>]

“Not only did these middle-class workers already lose huge chunks of retirement money to huckster financiers in the crash, and not only are they now being asked to take the long-term hit for those years of greed and speculative excess, but in many cases they're also being forced to sit by and watch helplessly as Gordon Gekko wanna-be's like Loeb or scorched-earth takeover artists like Bain Capital are put in charge of their retirement savings.”

“One common tactic involved illegally borrowing cash from public retirement funds to finance other budget needs.”

These tactics are usually “...shielded from public scrutiny.” In this case it is legal but is it ethical?

Quebec cannot afford to directly finance public transit and especially the REM from its general fund so it is raiding the public pension legacy trust funds to do so. Recycling guaranteed income is dangerous. It is akin to shoveling sand from spot to another and building a sand castle.

- **2. Tunnels, Viaducts, High lines and Elevated Structures**

The REM project talks about countless tunnels and bridges, the cost of which remains unclear. The former Train de l'Ouest project only spoke of one major level crossing project at Westminster/Elmhurst/West Broadway which would cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 million dollars. The REM's capital cost is beyond what the taxpayer can spend.

- **3. The Caisse has been entrusted by Quebec Province to build major public transit infrastructure**

Why has it not studied the full range of options and proposed an integrated system which uses existing modes to their fullest? For example, where is the future study for intercity passenger rail services? The REM will apprehend vital infrastructure such as the Two Mountains line, the Mount Royal Tunnel, parts of Central Station and tracks south of Central Station which will not be able to be used for full size railway loading gauge trains. Where is the logic?

- **4. External costs:**

Have the planners at the Caisse assessed externalities such as increased car traffic to the REM, traffic jams, more truck traffic as a result of the decommissioning of the Doney Spur for Freight rail, or the creation of heat islands and sinks due to the large parking facilities next to the REM stations? What of all the protected and unprotected natural spaces that will be despoiled by this project? How many trees will be felled by the advent of the REM? How will this project affect our protected and unprotected natural spaces and parkland? How many trees will be planted? How many animals will lose their frail and threatened habitat? How many animals will be left homeless and perish? During the BAPE hearings on the Turcot, it was promised

that the St Jacques Escarpment natural space would not be touched. It has. Will this be case with our adjacent natural spaces as well?

- **5. Will the REM be a driver for more cars and trucks on the road, thus inherently anti environment and anti rail?**

- **6. The use of materials:**

What will be the quality of the concrete? Will there be built in obsolescence like the Champlain Bridge? Will the REM be using reinforced steel concrete which rots out within 40 years? The costs outweigh the intelligence of providing a maintenance program.

- **7. Snow has been an issue for the SkyTrain. Have the planners spoken on this topic?**

- **8. The Caisse owns 30% of Bombardier's Rail Division.**

How does this affect the project? Will there be effective competition? Will there be effective bidding?

- **9. Bombardier, the supplier of the SkyTrain, is unable to deliver streetcars and LRT vehicles to the TTC and GO/Metrolinx on time and on budget.** There have been massive delays because of supply chain and technical issues. Bombardier has diverted manpower and plants from its Aerospace division to produce the rail vehicles for the Toronto area. What makes us think that the rolling stock for the REM will be on time and on budget or work for that matter?

- **10. Capacity - A rough estimate:**

The proposed REM, akin to Vancouver's SkyTrain, at maximum capacity offers 6 car train sets. Each car can reasonably host 150 passengers. In all, one train has a capacity of 600 passengers.

Calgary's LRT is comprised of 4 car train sets. Each car has a capacity of 200 passengers. One train can host a maximum of 600 to 800 passengers.

The current modernized Two Mountains line and its MR90 electric car trains have 10 car train sets during weekdays. The Trains have 900 seats and can carry a maximum of 1,800 passengers. The double decker or Bilevel car order that was unceremoniously cancelled recently would have increased the passenger capacity of this threatened train line significantly. Why does one needlessly destroy a relatively well working railway system before its retirement?

- **11. Why is Central Station the focal point?** It does not have a direct metro connection as does the former Windsor Station?

- **12. Is the future of the Vaudreuil Hudson Suburban train line secure?** What are the Caisses' plans for all AMT line in the present and in the future?

- **13. The Borough of St Laurent is alarmed at the probability of a massive parking lot along beside the REM's A13 station.**

It is proposing moving this parking lot to Laval. Shuttle buses would interconnect with A13 riders at St Laurent. Imagine the log jam of a string of busses! Is that environmental? What is the footprint of the parking lots and ancillary bus lines? Is this logical? How many Heat Islands and heat Sinks will be created because of the construction of the massive station parking lots?

- **14. Why the airport line? Why a circuitous route?** The REM will most likely lose money. What kind of an investment is that? Why the airport line? Downtown is a minority destination for most Montrealers who are travelling to and from the airport. Montreal is no longer a major hub or catchment.

Even Quebec based Air Transit does not fly out directly to many destinations from Montreal. Quite often it has stopovers at Toronto as Montreal does not bring enough capacity.

15. Has the Caisse considered demographics? We have an aging population. Will the current rate of immigration be enough to support the train in the future?

• **16. Is the quoted figure of \$5.5 billion dollars only a starting point?** Will there be cost overruns? How profitable will this be? How profitable will this project be? There are very few transit systems that break even worldwide. Most lose money and have to be subsidized. What will be the profit and loss scenario? What will be the rate of return? How many services and costs will be externalized to others including general funds from the taxpayer? What is required is a Forensic Audit of the REM.

• **17. Is the project truly TOD or TAD?** The REM seems more like a transit adjacent project which encourages new buildings but not necessarily an integrated transit approach where walking distance is a factor. Is more of a car oriented project than a transit oriented project?

• **18. What will be fare structure?** Will it be high or will it be integrated with the current transit agency fares. A high fare will deter ridership as it had with the Union Pearson Express in Toronto.

ANNEX (b): Background article

Tremblay's rail plan off track, critics say

Where some see only barren tracts of knee-high weeds and rusted steel, Avrom Shtern and Andrew Dawson see potential.

By Linda Gyulai, The Gazette (Montreal) July 9, 2007

Where some see only barren tracts of knee-high weeds and rusted steel, Avrom Shtern and Andrew Dawson see potential.

The two friends are railway buffs. And they can sketch commuter train routes along much of the 883 kilometres of railway tracks that cover the island of Montreal like a system of veins.

Dawson and Shtern, who met at an event celebrating Montreal West's railway signal tower 11 years ago, say they'll be critical of Mayor Gerald Tremblay's 20-year, \$8.1-billion transportation plan when they get to present briefs at hearings next month.

It's not that Shtern or Dawson oppose the plan's bounty of projects for other transportation modes, like a new billion-dollar tramway network, bicycle paths, metro extensions and new buses.

But for a development proposal that claims to peer 20 years into the future, the Tremblay plan paints a fuzzy picture for the train, they say.

"I found some stuff is vague," Dawson, a St. Laurent resident who grew up near the Deux Montagnes commuter rail line, said of the plan's train component. "And some stuff is lunacy."

The folly is largely in what the plan doesn't say, said Dawson, 28.

It offers no commitment to conserve rail lines for future use, no train ridership projections, no objective to electrify the island's mostly diesel tracks, no new rail stations for the city's underserved west end.

And in a heart-breaking omission for Shtern and Dawson, the plan ignores a long-standing proposal by the Green Coalition environmental group to create fast, frequent light-rail passenger service on the West Island using an industrial rail line called the Doney Spur.

"They've put it on the back burner," said Shtern, 46, a Green Coalition member.

Shtern, an English-as-a-second-language teacher and literacy volunteer, became fascinated with trains growing up in Cote St. Luc next to the tracks on the Canadian Pacific Railway's Adirondack subdivision.

Dawson and Shtern consume railway news from journals and magazines, like *Railfan & Railroad* out of the United States, and Internet discussion groups. They can recount the history of any rail line in the region.

The Doney Spur, owned by Canadian National, branches off the Montreal-Deux Montagnes commuter train line (1) just after its Bois Franc station in St. Laurent. It runs between the Trans-Canada Highway and Hymus Blvd. The tracks end almost at St. Jean Blvd. in Pointe Claire. CN sold the land beyond that point some years ago, but the old right-of-way continues to Stillview Ave., near the Lakeshore General Hospital.

The Green Coalition first proposed the Doney Spur "surface metro" in 1989 and recently garnered major support: Tremblay's 2005 election campaign platform promised to build a West Island rail service along the Doney Spur, and the city's 2004 Urban Plan includes it.

But now, Tremblay's transportation plan doesn't call for commuter rail service on the Doney Spur. Instead, it raises the possibility of a dedicated bus route in that corridor. Someday.

The bus route won't happen, Shtern predicted. CN has told municipal officials it has no plans to sell the spur or to stop operating freight service on it.

And since May, Green Coalition members have sounded the alarm that a Home Depot store is being built on the old Doney Spur right-of-way west of St. Jean Blvd.

The Tremblay administration says it is looking into it.

Glen Fisher, a transportation consultant and former CPR engineer with 40 years in the rail business, says the Doney Spur could easily accommodate a proposal in the Tremblay plan to build a rail shuttle between downtown and Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport. A rail line branches off from the Doney Spur north of the airport and stops at the airport fence.

The Tremblay plan calls for the airport shuttle to be built on either the CN or CPR lines near Highway 20 for \$550 million.

Fisher says an airport shuttle on the Doney Spur would make the trip from downtown in 20 minutes like the other route, but would cost about \$60 million. It includes the cost to dig a trench for an electrified track around the airport's west-end runways and to build a terminal platform.

Fisher, who has a client who wants to sell electric trains in the region, says train cars would add another \$70 million.

On the other hand, the trains on the Deux Montagnes commuter line, which will soon be replaced by double-decker train cars, "are perfect" to reuse on the airport link, he said.

The Doney Spur offers benefits, said Florence Junca-Adenot, former president and executive director of the Metropolitan Transit Agency, the provincial body that operates commuter trains and co-ordinates planning for the Montreal region.

The spur would connect the West Island to the metro system in St. Laurent, because the Tremblay plan calls for extending the Metro Orange Line to the Bois Franc train station, she said.

And it would provide commuter train access to St. Laurent's Technoparc, a major employment hub, she said.

"It should at least be discussed," Junca-Adenot said.

Current MTA president and executive director Joel Gauthier said he has an open mind, but the CN and CPR lines near Highway 20, currently being studied by a steering committee he co-chairs with Aeroports de Montreal, make more sense for an airport rail.

The CN line, which goes to Central Station, carries freight trains and VIA Rail passenger trains. The CPR line, which heads to Lucien L'Allier (Windsor) station, carries freight and commuter trains on the MTA's Dorion-Rigaud line.

"What we're looking for is to put the freight on one set of tracks and put passengers on the other set of tracks," Gauthier said, so the two would no longer impede each other.

He added he has "no idea where the \$550 million comes from" in the Tremblay plan.

The Tremblay plan also blows the chance to reuse other rail lines, the critics contend.

Take the \$300-million Montreal-Repentigny-Mascouche commuter train line, known as the Train de l'est, which the Tremblay plan supports exactly as announced by the Quebec government more than a year ago.

When completed in 2011, the 51-kilometre route will run on existing tracks from Central Station through east-end Montreal to Repentigny.

However, a track has to be built to link Repentigny, Terrebonne and Mascouche.

Yet a track on CPR's old Trois Rivieres subdivision already exists between Laval, Terrebonne and Mascouche, Dawson said.

In fact, the MTA's 2002 strategic plan called for two separate commuter lines: Laval-Terrebonne-Mascouche, which would allow transfers onto the de la Concorde metro station, and Montreal-Repentigny.

Now owned by Quebec Gatineau Railway Inc., the Laval-Terrebonne-Mascouche track carries freight. But it carried passengers between Montreal and Trois Rivieres until 1990, Dawson said.

"The Train de l'est makes sense all the way to Repentigny, but to build a new line doesn't make sense," Shtern said.

"Yes, I am a rail fan. But I try to see things where they truly fit, where a train will truly serve its purpose."

Montreal supports the Train de l'est because of its benefits to east-end Montreal, said city councillor Andre Lavallee, the executive committee member responsible for transportation.

About 70 per cent of the line's projected 5,500 passengers will be east-end residents from places like St. Leonard, Riviere des Prairies and Pointe aux Trembles, where there is neither metro nor train service, he said.

As for the new track between Repentigny and Mascouche, Lavallee said he has no comment. "It's a provincial project."

Gauthier said a recent MTA study shows the Laval-Terrebonne-Mascouche line would require \$100 million to refurbish.

He said the tracks and signalling system need to be upgraded for passenger trains and the tracks doubled on the Montreal-Blainville commuter line to accommodate trains from Mascouche transferring onto it near the metro.

If the Laval-Terrebonne-Mascouche line was in service, the MTA couldn't put more trains on the popular Montreal-Blainville line, Gauthier added.

Fisher said it's hogwash. "You could start a commuter train service on the line again tomorrow morning," he said. In fact, the trip would be faster by train from Mascouche to de la Concorde metro station and then by metro to downtown than taking the Train de l'est from Mascouche to downtown, he said.

And while the MTA has launched a call for proposals to get dual-mode - electric and diesel - trains built for the Train de l'est, Fisher predicts the new trains will cost more than if it just electrified diesel lines.

Commuter trains have been a fixture in Montreal since the Montreal-Lachine railway began shuttling passengers in 1863 and the Grand Trunk Railway started moving passengers across the Victoria Bridge in the 1870s.

However, rail expert David Hanna, director of graduate studies in urban studies at the Universite du Quebec a Montreal, warns the commuter train is a double-edged sword.

"Unfortunately, as efficient as they are in terms of environmental issues and solving traffic problems, they have one danger," he said. "It's that they do tend to promote urban sprawl."

Chicago has the problem in spades, Hanna said.

"They have the best commuter train service on the continent, along with New York City. And Chicago is also one of the most sprawled cities in North America because of it."

Workers commute from as far as Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan, boarding the train to Chicago at its commuter terminal 160 kilometres from downtown.

"It's the highways that promote urban sprawl," Shtern countered. "Trains certainly encourage development, but you can steer that development so that it's oriented around stations instead of highways."

Hanna added the double-edged sword means only that rail lines must be carefully planned. That means conserving any existing lines even if they're not needed right now, he said.

"There have been some enormous stupidities committed in the very recent past," he said, pointing out the Montreal-Blainville train line.

CPR discontinued commuter service on it in 1982 (2) and, with the province's blessing, dismantled some of its double track, he said.

In 1997, the MTA inaugurated service on it again as Blainville's population began to boom.

"In the next 50 years, we need to be planning around all of these lines, every single one of them, and every doggone right of way," Hanna said.

And that's Shtern and Dawson's point.

The Urban Plan talks about conserving train lines like the Doney Spur and another called the LaSalle Loop for future use.

"But they haven't acted on it," Shtern said of the city.

The tracks of the LaSalle Loop, owned by CPR, were lifted between Newman Blvd. and the Lachine Canal, but much of the corridor still exists. The Green Coalition proposes a light-rail train, branching off from the LaSalle commuter train station on the Montreal-Delton-Candiac line near the Mercier Bridge and connecting to Angrignon station on the metro Green Line.

Shtern and Dawson contend the real battle is against a bias that favours the car.

"When railways are abandoned, it's not for economic reasons, it's for political reasons," Dawson said.

"If there's a downturn in the economy, you're not going to rip out the road from in front of your house."

lgyulai@postmedia.com

(1) AMT bought the Two Mountains Line from CN for \$92 million in 2014 with an offer of first refusal to acquire the Doney Spur.

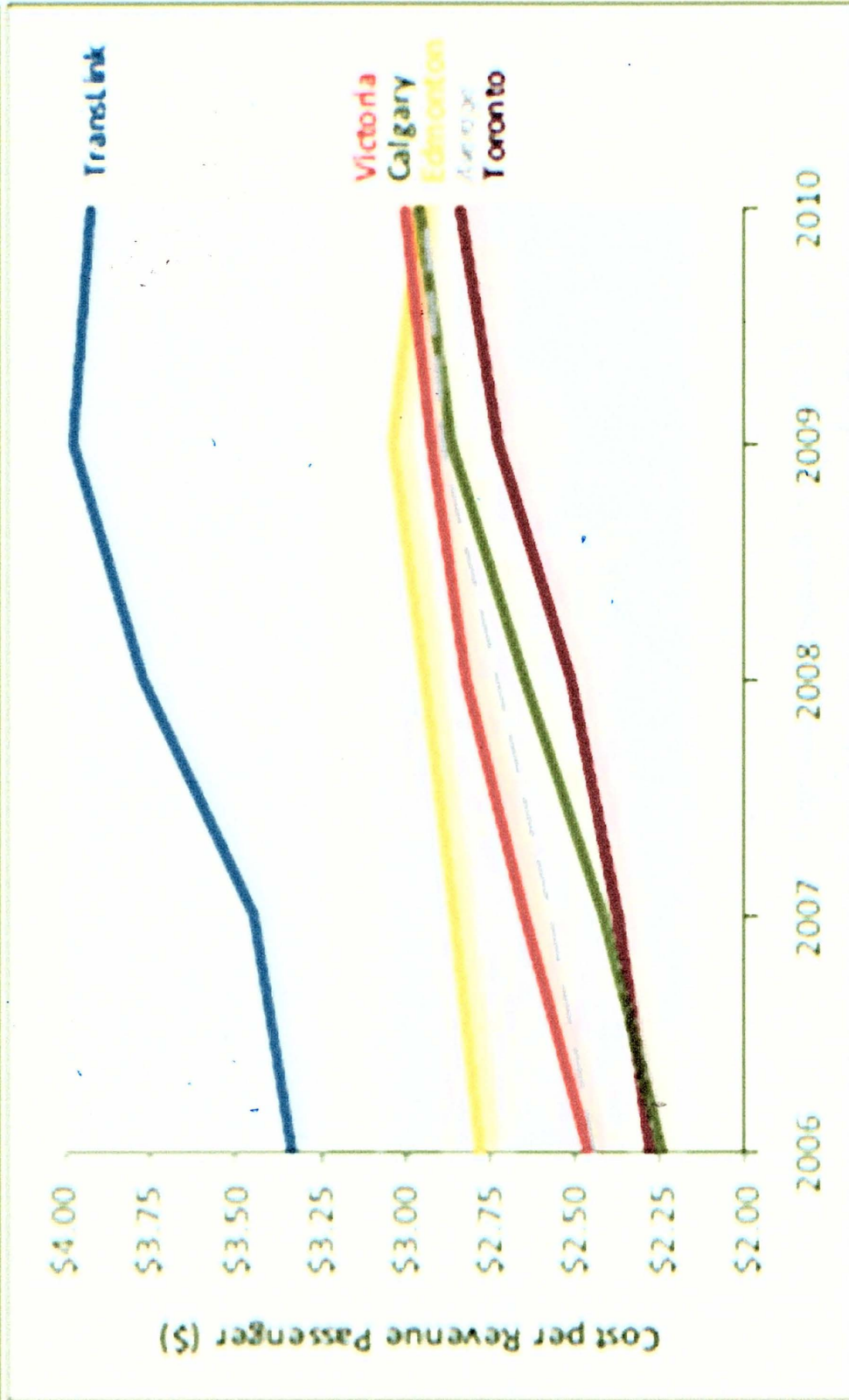
(2) In 1980, the Farnham and Ste. Therese suburban dayliner train service were discontinued by Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). In 1982, the Rigaud line was transferred from CPR to the MUCTC/STCUM. In between, in 1981 the Federal Liberal Pierre Elliot Trudeau government massively cut local VIA Rail service to places like Lachute and Hull which also served Ste. Therese, Rosemere, etc.

RÉFÉRENCE:

Diagramme: «*COST COMPARISONS*» Source: CUTA Canadian Transit Fact Book

Rappel historique: *Coalition Verte 1988 – 2013 25^e anniversaire*

FIGURE 4-9: TRANSLINK CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT VS. COMPARATORS, COST PER REVENUE PASSENGER, 2006-2010



Source: CUTA Canadian Transit Fact Books

Rappel historique: Coalition Verte, 1988 – 2013, 25^e anniversaire

Fondée en 1988, et forte d'une cinquantaine de groupes citoyens, la Coalition Verte s'est bâtie une réputation solide dans la région montréalaise. Grâce à notre capacité de rallier les citoyens et convaincre les élus, nous avons contribué grandement aux réalisations suivantes: l'adoption, en 1989, du programme de 200 millions de dollars pour l'acquisition et aménagement d'espaces verts ce qui a permis la consolidation du réseau des Parc-Nature d'est en ouest de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal; l'adoption, en 2004, de la Politique de protection et mise en valeur des milieux naturels par la Ville de Montréal qui poursuit la mise en œuvre de cette politique dans son budget; la fondation, en 2003, des Partenaires du Parc Écologique de l'Archipel de Montréal, précurseur du Mouvement Ceinture Verte, qui compte plus de 100 partenaires à l'échelle locale, incluant 17 partenaires municipaux, dont la Ville de Montréal et son agglomération; et finalement, à l'automne 2011, la Coalition mobilisait vigoureusement les citoyens afin d'exiger la création d'une ceinture verte pour le Grand Montréal et le Sud-Ouest du Québec lors des consultations publiques sur le PMAD-Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement. Approuvé le 8 décembre 2011, le PMAD s'engage à la création d'une ceinture verte ou « trame verte et bleue » et à la protection des milieux naturels sur 17 % du territoire métropolitain d'ici 2020, mais aussi à ce que les politiques de restauration atteignent 30 % du couvert forestier régional. (Power Point 25^e anniversaire 2013)

Avrom David Shtern - Analyste de transport qui écrit fréquemment sur le transport ferroviaire.
Septembre 2016