TORONTO REGION BOARD OF TRADE

WHAT'S AT STAKE

TORONTO MUNICIPAL ELECTION ISSUE GUIDE

Congestion, Transit and Infrastructure

SEPTEMBER 2026

The choices Torontonians make in the municipal election will shape how our city grows over the next few years. To help voters understand what is at stake, the Toronto Region Board of Trade is publishing a series of three non-partisan issue guides breaking down some of the city's most complex economic challenges. Each guide explains the problem, why it matters and the actions the next mayor and council should consider.

With the GTHA accounting for approximately 20 per cent of Canada's GDP, Toronto's transportation network has national economic implications. Improving mobility throughout the city is an economic imperative. By using multiple modes of transport, the city can help to reduce congestion, improve goods movement and productivity, strengthen business competitiveness, expand access to jobs, and support continued growth.

The ongoing congestion problem has quickly become one of the most significant threats to Toronto's economic competitiveness and quality of life. Whether commuting to work, moving goods across the region, attending a major event, or accessing essential services, residents and businesses increasingly experience a transportation system under strain. The general sentiment is that Toronto is an hour away from Toronto.

Toronto must plan for a connected system with alternative modes that are accessible and affordable. This includes implementing the necessary infrastructure and providing sufficient operating funding. Integration across the region is also critical, as millions of trips are made across municipal boundaries, connecting residents with housing and employment opportunities.

A growing global city cannot reduce congestion or improve mobility without a transit system that is fast, reliable, safe, and financially sustainable. If Toronto expects more residents and workers to choose transit, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) must be positioned to deliver a high-quality customer experience while maintaining a credible long-term plan for investment and growth.

Effective transit provides residents, workers, and visitors with a practical alternative to driving, while maximizing the movement of people within limited road space. However, the TTC continues to face challenges related to reliability, travel times, service quality, customer experience, and safety. Congestion also affects transit operations. Delays to buses and streetcars reduce reliability, increase operating costs and reduce the attractiveness of transit as a transportation option. Integration and coordination between regional transit agencies could be improved to make travelling across the region easier. Addressing these issues is essential if Toronto expects transit to play a larger role in reducing congestion and supporting future population and economic growth.

BY THE NUMBERS

Congestion costs the GTHA economy

$44.7B annually

INCLUDING

$10B	$2B	88,000
in lost productivity	in unrealized investment	jobs lost

Without action, these costs are projected to rise to

$85.5B per year by 2044

as the region grows by 2.1 million people.

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

The TTC moves over a million customers per day, yet reliable service delivery remains a challenge as demonstrated by TTC's performance metrics for May 2026, as reported in the July CEO Report:

	SUBWAY	STREETCAR	BUS
TARGET	90%	90%	90%
ACTUAL	>90%	60%	74%

Infrastructure

Toronto relies on well-maintained roads, public transit systems, water systems, and public facilities to support its growing population and economy. Well-timed and coordinated investment in key infrastructure helps reduce congestion, improve mobility, attract businesses, creates jobs, and ensure residents have access to reliable services.

However, Toronto's challenge is no longer simply identifying infrastructure needs but determining how to prioritize its limited resources. The City of Toronto has identified a $31.7 billion in unfunded critical state-of-good-repair, service improvement initiatives and transit expansion projects over the next 10 years, representing 52.8 per cent of the total 10-year capital plan.

While the City has identified substantial infrastructure requirements, it has not clearly explained how investments should be prioritized to achieve specific economic, social, and service goals. Without a clear prioritization framework, decision-makers face difficult trade-offs between competing needs, including housing, community facilities, and state-of-good-repair projects.

Compounding this issue is the time and space needed to build new and fix existing infrastructure. With a long list of needed capital projects, the city needs to ensure that projects are scheduled to limit disruption to businesses and residents. Procurement and delivery models also need to be considered for timeliness and budget impact. With such a large capital plan backlog, projects must be delivered on-time and on budget so that the next project can proceed.

At the same time, the City continues to hold significant assets whose value could be better leveraged to support growth and improve fiscal sustainability. With all levels of government facing fiscal constraints, the City must take a different approach. This means prioritizing investments that deliver the greatest public value, improving project delivery, coordinating infrastructure construction, and ensuring that limited resources are aligned with long-term economic and population growth objectives.

The City of Toronto's 10-year **capital budget** and plan totals

$63.1B

WHICH INCLUDES:

Transit needs	$17.3B
Housing-related requirements	$8.8B
Shelter capital pressures	$1.1B

The City of Toronto has in **infrastructure assets**

$205.9B

INCLUDING:

Parks and other land	$6.8B
Buildings, facilities and fleet	$16.3B
Toronto Community Housing	$20.5B
Transportation infrastructure	$26.4B
Toronto Transit Commission	$40.8B
Water and wastewater	$95.2B

So, What's at Stake?

Toronto must position itself as the country's leading destination for investment and growth, as it supports the broader region, province and country. The cost of inaction continues to rise through lost productivity, reduced competitiveness, worsening congestion, and growing infrastructure deficits. To address these challenges, the Toronto Region Board of Trade is advocating for three outcomes.

1. Keep Toronto Moving

The City has adopted many of the recommendations contained in the Board's Breaking Gridlock report. Progress has been made; construction related road closures and peak-period travel times have been reduced. Transit signal priority has improved travel times on Line 5 and Line 6. However, action must continue to be taken to fully implement all the recommendations and improve day-to-day commutes. Additionally, the city must measure the performance of what is being implemented and hold agencies accountable.

PRIORITY ACTIONS INCLUDE:

Prioritize major arterials to ensure the free flow of vehicles and transit. This includes reviewing parking permissions, and lane and road closure permits on arterials to enable the free flow of traffic, while identifying alternative locations on local streets where appropriate. This must be accompanied by strong enforcement and smart signal technology.

Clear arterial roads enable traffic to move uninterrupted and faster across the city and help to improve the reliability of bus and streetcar routes, improving daily commutes.

Expand the use of 24/7 construction to reduce disruption and accelerate project timelines. The City should also increase lane closure fees to better reflect their economic impact and incentivize shorter construction timelines.

24/7 construction speeds up project timelines, limiting the time that residents and businesses are impacted by construction.

Implement a transportation network performance metric framework with publicly reported KPIs to improve accountability and support a coordinated "one-city" approach to congestion and transit management.

Key performance indicators measure the progress of actions taken and ensure those responsible are held accountable to take action to reduce congestion.

The next mayor needs to be a leader in advancing greater coordination across the regional transportation network. Residents and businesses don't stop moving at municipal boundaries, and improved regional coordination will increase the speed and efficiency of travel for both people and goods. At the same time, the Province must implement key recommendations identified in Breaking Gridlock; Finishing the Job through Provincial Action, including automated "block-the-box" enforcement and stronger lane-closure rules since municipal actions cannot deliver at scale.

2. Build a Faster, More Reliable Transit Network

Reducing congestion requires making transit the preferred mode of transportation for more residents and workers. While significant investments are being made to expand the transit network, improving the performance of existing service must remain a priority.

PRIORITY ACTIONS INCLUDE:

Maintain and expand RapidTO routes. RapidTO routes implemented on Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street for the FIFA World Cup should be retained and extended north. RapidTO routes currently under evaluation such as Jane Street should also be implemented.

Continue implementing transit signal priority, with a focus on streetcar routes in the downtown core and on dedicated transit rights-of-ways. Transit signal priority along Lines 5 and 6 has significantly improved on-time performance. Small changes can make big impacts; with a five second traffic light adjustment on Bathurst Street contributed to a two minute on-time performance improvement for the 511 streetcar.

RapidTO and transit signal priority routes allow buses to travel more reliably and faster, improving the ridership experience. Improving transit performance can better help the TTC respond to changes in ridership patterns around the city.

Hold transit agencies and divisions accountable. Holding the TTC, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority jointly accountable for surface transit performance to improve coordination and customer outcomes.

Toronto has many divisions and agencies responsible for controlling what happens on the roadway. By working together in a more coordinated way, they can resolve problems such as parking blocking a streetcar or bus, helping riders to travel faster and more reliably across the city.

Adopt fare and service integration in partnership with the Province and regional transit agencies. In its first year, 25 million riders used the OneFare program and contributed to a 27 per cent growth in ridership at Union Station. Building on the success of One Fare and the Province's transit integration initiatives, greater integration would improve customer experience, increase ridership, strengthen TTC revenues, and support a more connected regional transit network. Next steps should be aligned with the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026.

By forecasting capital projects out 25 years, the TTC can better plan upgrades and new projects that will create a faster, safer and more reliable daily commute.

Fare and service integration will help riders move around the Toronto region easier, increasing access to housing and job opportunities. It will make travelling between municipalities easier and more coordinated, making commuting faster and more reliable.

Incorporate lessons learned from Line 5 and Line 6 into the construction, integration, and operation of future projects, in coordination with Metrolinx. The next four years present the best opportunity to incorporate these lessons, with minimal impact to the projects and city. These projects should be evaluated not only as transportation investments, but as city-building opportunities that can support housing, economic development, and the long-term financial sustainability of the TTC.

Addressing how new projects will integrate to the existing system earlier will limit delays and reduce costs later. The best time to resolve these challenges is while the projects are still under construction.

Prioritize the $53.9 billion TTC capital investment plan to align capital spending with clearly defined service outcomes to 2051. Capital investments should be guided by a long-term vision for the transit network, supported by realistic delivery plans, and informed by the recommendations from the Board's Price of Progress: Enabling the Delivery of Critical Transit Infrastructure report. Emerging capital projects such as platform edge doors, should be prioritized within the plan and the agency's ability to deliver.

By forecasting capital projects out 25 years, the TTC can better plan upgrades and new projects that will create a faster, safer and more reliable daily commute. The capital plan also supports the city in making broader infrastructure investments and policy decisions such as where increased housing density should go.

3. Prioritize Infrastructure for Growth

Infrastructure investment underpins economic and population growth, enabling further private sector investments and quality of life improvements. However, with more than $31 billion in unfunded capital requirements, Toronto must establish a clearer framework for prioritizing investments and managing its infrastructure portfolio.

THE CITY SHOULD:

Prioritize the City's capital plans and portfolio based on defined economic, service, and growth outcomes. The City should also adopt recommendations from the Board's Price of Progress: Enabling the Delivery of Critical Transit Infrastructure, to better plan and deliver capital projects across the city.

A prioritized capital plan means the city can invest in upgrades, fixes and new projects that are going to have the highest impact for residents and businesses.

Improve the coordination of City and agency capital projects, to avoid disruption to businesses and residents. Recent examples—including simultaneous closures affecting the Gardiner Expressway, TTC Line 2, GO Transit service, and major downtown events—demonstrate the economic and social costs of poor coordination. The City should establish a stronger central coordination function to align infrastructure projects, reduce disruption, and improve the customer experience.

Improved communication gives the public the information they need to better plan their trips around the city. Coordination can also support getting projects done quicker, reducing the amount of time lanes are blocked or roads are closed, helping residents move faster across the city.

Our Questions for Candidates

1. How would you further empower the Chief Congestion Officer to address congestion and improve the performance of Toronto's transportation network, including through the use of KPIs, smart technology, and stronger coordination across City divisions and agencies?

2. How would you support the TTC in delivering faster, more reliable, and more customer-focused transit service? What role do you see for initiatives such as fare and service integration, improved communications, wayfinding, and safety in growing ridership?

3. With more than $31 billion in unfunded capital needs, how would you develop a long-term fiscal framework to prioritize infrastructure investments and ensure resources are directed toward projects that deliver the greatest economic and community benefit?

4. How would you improve coordination of capital projects across the City, its agencies, and regional partners to accelerate infrastructure delivery, minimize congestion and disruption, and prepare Toronto for continued growth?

TORONTO
REGION
BOARD OF TRADE

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 10,500 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** and follow us on LinkedIn.