



Connecting the East:

A draft transportation plan for eastern Ontario

April 2022



Table of Contents

Minister's Message.....	3
Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction.....	7
The Role of Regional Transportation Plans.....	9
Why Do We Need a Transportation Plan for Eastern Ontario?.....	10
Eastern Ontario's Transportation Network Today.....	10
Challenges and Opportunities.....	13
A Plan for Eastern Ontario.....	16
Goal 1: Connecting People and Places.....	17
Goal 2: Supporting a Competitive and Open for Business Environment.....	20
Goal 3: Providing More Choice and Convenience.....	22
Goal 4: Improving Safety and Inclusion.....	26
Goal 5: Preparing for the Future.....	29
The City of Ottawa.....	31
Working Together with Partners.....	33
Next Steps.....	34



Caroline
Mulroney

Minister of
Transportation

Minister's Message

Our government has a plan to build a stronger Ontario and that is why we are getting shovels in the ground on critical infrastructure projects like highways, roads, bridges and transit. Our vision includes an interconnected transportation network that is safe, convenient and affordable for all Ontarians, no matter where they live. Since taking office, we have taken decisive action to create a comprehensive and coordinated approach to transportation planning that will serve as the foundation of a healthy and prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

Eastern Ontario is home to almost two million people and nearly one million jobs. This diverse and thriving region faces challenging and costly gridlock on the highways surrounding our nation's capital, along with a lack of intercommunity bus services to help people get to work, access education and other essential services, and visit their loved ones.


People in eastern Ontario deserve transportation that works for them. And under Premier Ford's leadership, we're delivering on our promise to develop a regional plan that addresses the region's unique needs while supporting our broader goal to build a better Ontario.

Our regional transportation plan for eastern Ontario – ***Connecting the East*** – contains more than 50 actions that will lay the foundation to improve people's access to jobs, housing, healthcare, education and family and friends. This plan outlines strategies and improvements across different modes of travel to connect people and places, support a competitive and open business environment, provide more choice and convenience, improve safety and inclusion, and help us prepare for the future.

With that in mind, our plan considers many new challenges including significant population growth, economic transitions, impacts of climate change, new technologies and shifting demographics that present new and increased demands on Ontario's current and future transportation systems.

This plan will guide our historic investments as we increase the capacity of the infrastructure and improve the movement of people and goods along the key eastern corridors. It includes a commitment to look at practical approaches to fill gaps in travel options for smaller communities and expand the level of choice in larger ones. And all of the measures contained within this plan consider ways to increase safety as we build a transportation network that makes life more convenient for travellers while embracing innovation and technological change.

Our plan is an evergreen, living document that will continuously evolve, be updated and improved to be responsive to the needs of people and businesses. We are committed to continuing to work closely with municipal, Indigenous, and Francophone communities, transportation



agencies, including Metrolinx, industry, and businesses to align planning and improve transportation in eastern Ontario. We will also establish a regional transportation task force to provide a venue for local municipal and Indigenous leaders to work together to help connect people to the places they need to go.

Together we're building Ontario and this includes a transportation network for the East that ensures people have access to the roads, highways, bridges, transit and ferries they need to enjoy a better quality of life and that supports economic growth and prosperity.

Executive Summary

Eastern Ontario is a thriving region in our province. It is home to the nation's capital and one of the nation's most significant trade corridors, popular tourist destinations, and a diverse economy. However, people and businesses in the region today are facing numerous transportation challenges. These challenges range from fighting gridlock on highways in the Ottawa area to accessing more options to travel within and between communities. The regional economy depends on efficient multimodal links, while adapting to rapid changes in technology and increasing climate impacts present a challenge for all areas of our province.

Connecting the East: a draft transportation plan for eastern Ontario contains more than 50 actions to help build a safe, reliable and connected transportation system that keeps people and goods moving within and across the region. It includes investments to rehabilitate and expand highways, improve transit and intercommunity bus options, support economic development opportunities and ensure that the region's transportation system is ready for the future.

VISION:

Individuals, families and businesses across eastern Ontario have access to safe and reliable options within a transportation system that connects local communities, and contributes to the health, well-being and economic prosperity of the entire region.

The actions are organized under five goals to improve transportation in the region:

Goal 1: Connecting people and places

Transportation systems are fundamentally about providing people and businesses with connections to get themselves and products and services to where they need to go safely and as easily and efficiently as possible. We are taking action to expand infrastructure in strategic locations to manage growth, ensuring current facilities and

services are well-maintained and improved, and continuing work to identify needs and opportunities. Highlights include expanding Highway 417 to fight gridlock in Ottawa, widening Highway 17 from Arnprior to Renfrew, improving ferry services that are essential for passengers and goods in many communities, and establishing an eastern region task force to support plan implementation and advise on potential improvements and new initiatives.

Goal 2: Supporting a competitive and open for business environment

A reliable, efficient transportation system is critical for the success of a growing and prosperous economy in eastern Ontario. Actions in this area of the plan will help create a competitive business environment by reducing red tape, helping highways that are heavily used for goods movement run more smoothly and exploring opportunities to maximize the potential of the multimodal transportation system including the rail, marine, air and road transport modes. To support the crucial trade corridor along Highway 401, there will be more truck parking and more interchanges compatible with long-combination vehicles (LCVs). A new marine strategy will be developed to help address challenges and opportunities. And the province will continue to collaborate with the goods movement sector to streamline processes, such as the online renewal of commercial vehicle licence plates and adoption of electronic logging devices (ELDs) to track compliance with hours of service requirements.

Goal 3: Providing more choice and convenience

Public engagement during the development of this plan underscored a desire in the region to add more options for travelling between communities and more ways to travel within them. The actions in this section of the plan include investments to provide new intercommunity bus services

in 10 communities in eastern Ontario through the Community Transportation Grant Program, including some in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations. Transit and active transportation improvements in 20 eastern municipalities are supported through the dedicated Gas Tax program. The deregulation of the intercommunity bus sector in 2021 will encourage new small businesses to provide additional service routes to complement those offered by established bus companies. The permanent increase of the speed limit on Highway 417 supports faster connections between communities.

Goal 4: Improving safety and inclusion

Making sure the transportation system is safe and reliable for all users is a key priority for this plan. Actions include investments in new, larger, full-colour, bilingual electronic signs at 11 locations that will reduce distractions and will be clearer to read in both English and French. The Ontario 511 service will continue to provide real-time local highway information to keep drivers aware of current conditions, collisions, snow plow locations, construction activities and emergency detour routes. Design and maintenance standards will consider the needs associated with slow-moving farm equipment, as well as ways to manage Wild Parsnip, an invasive species that grows rapidly and blocks sightlines along roads.

Goal 5: Preparing for the future

Technological advances are propelling significant changes in transportation, providing both an economic opportunity and a chance to prepare the region for the arrival of innovative technology like connected and automated vehicles that could transform the way people live, work and move in the province. Actions under this theme include investments in the new Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), along with cutting-edge test sites for new technologies at Area X.O. in Ottawa. Other actions include expanding high-speed internet across the region, assessing provincial locations for alternative fueling stations and using the latest climate data to assess risks to infrastructure.

Connecting the East will deliver a better transportation system for the people and communities of eastern Ontario, giving them more options to get where they need to go, when they want to get there. We are committed to working with the federal government, municipalities, states and provinces, Indigenous communities and organizations as well as Francophone residents and organizations, transportation providers, businesses, industry, and academia to ensure the transportation system supports the prosperity of the regional economy and provides a better quality of life for eastern residents and all Ontarians.



Introduction

Connecting the East: a draft transportation plan for eastern Ontario aims to build a safe, convenient and connected transportation network that addresses the unique needs of the eastern region. The plan contains more than 50 actions that will help connect local communities, fight gridlock on our busy highways and roads and keep them safe and reliable, add more public transit and active transportation, and support a globally competitive economy.

The area covered by the plan extends from the District of Muskoka in the west to the Counties of Prescott and Russell in the east. The largest urban centres in the region are Ottawa and Kingston, followed by the mid-sized cities of Cornwall, Belleville and Quinte West, along with many smaller towns and villages.

The City of Ottawa is the nation's capital and the largest city in eastern Ontario, containing more than half of the region's total population. It has a complex multimodal transportation network, which includes dedicated higher-order transit in the form of the Transitway bus rapid transit (BRT) and O-Train light rail transit (LRT) systems.

Eastern Ontario as a whole is home to 1.8 million people¹. The region is expected to experience gradual population growth, achieving just under 2.45 million residents in 2051². Approximately 75% of this growth is expected to occur in the Ottawa area.

1 Statistics Canada. *Census of Population, 2016: Profile for Canada, Provinces, Territories, Census Divisions, Census Subdivisions and Dissemination Areas*.

2 Based on Ontario Ministry of Finance forecasts.

About Eastern Ontario



1.8 million people
over 44,000 square km
(Density: 41 People/km²)



Population expected to grow
to over 2.4 million by 2051



15% of the region's population
identifies as Francophone



53% of Eastern Ontarians reside
in Ottawa,
which is growing the fastest in the
region



28% of the population
lives in rural areas



Key Industries

Public services, retail, professional services, education, hospitality



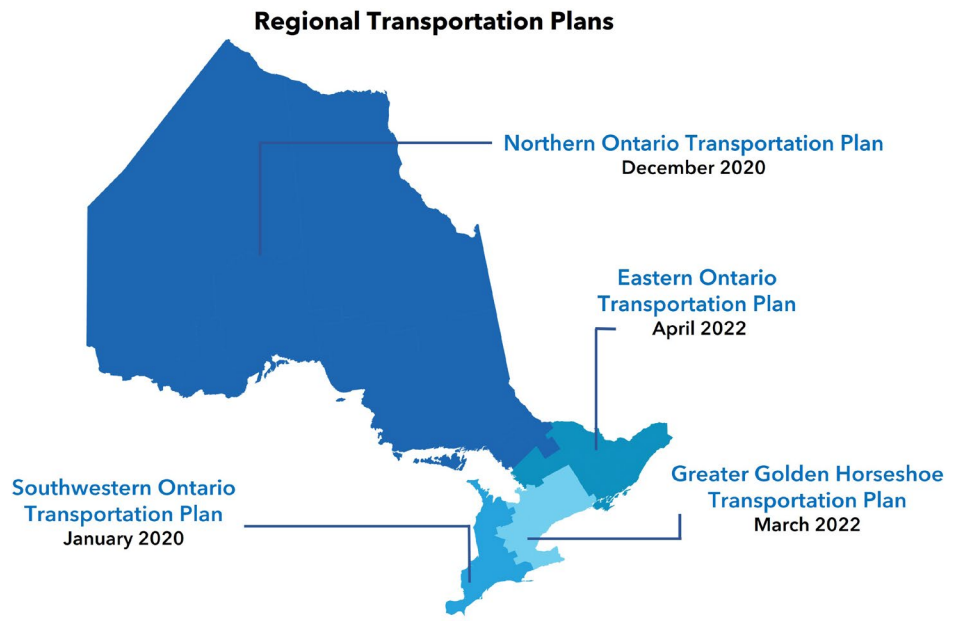
The natural landscape

includes Canadian Shield, St. Lawrence Lowlands and protected areas such as Thousand Islands National Park.

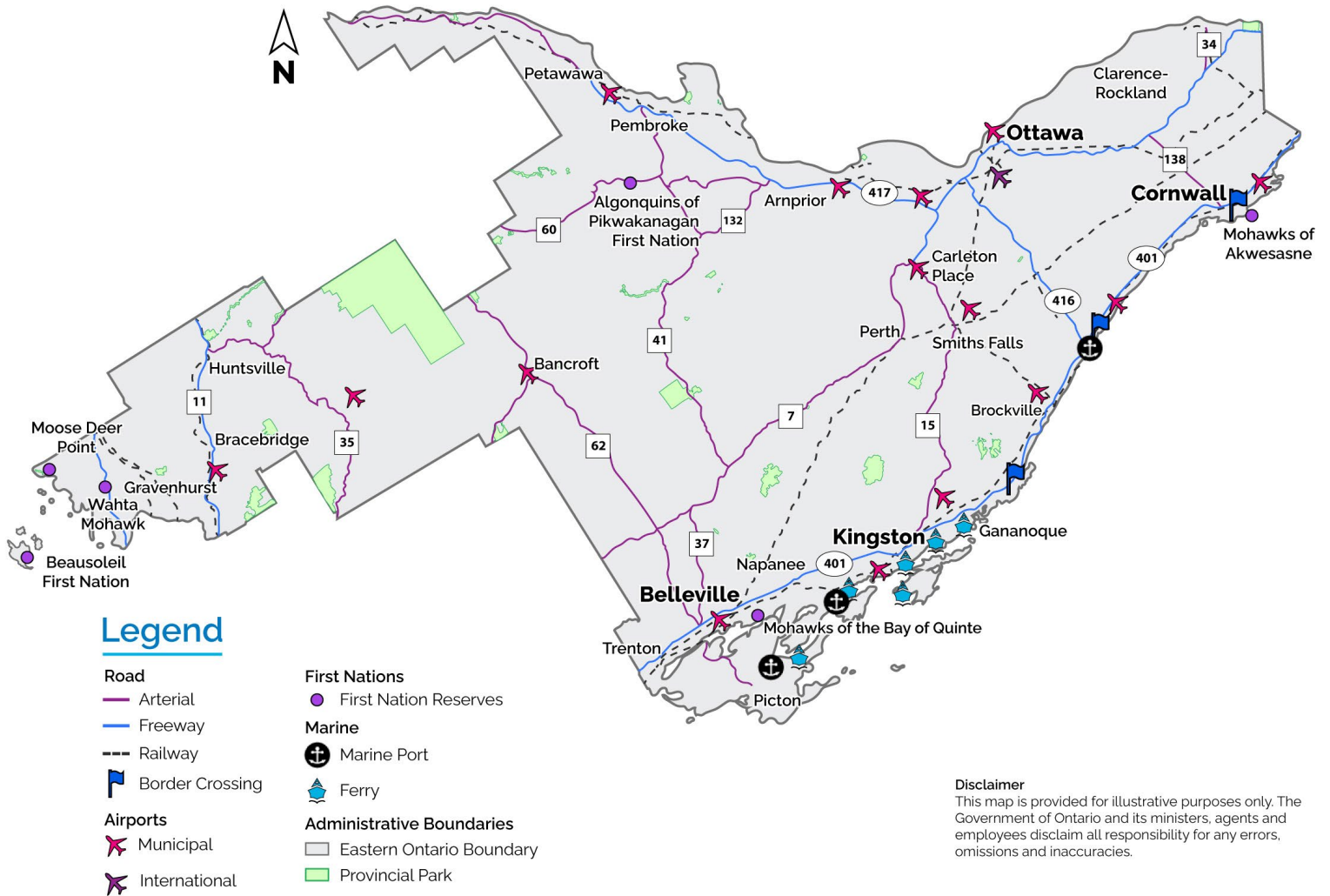


The Role of Regional Transportation Plans

In 2019, Ontario committed to developing regional plans to build a better, more seamless transportation system across the province. Regional transportation plans consider all modes of travel – road, rail, air and marine – as one integrated system and provide a vision of the transportation system of the future. This plan for eastern Ontario is the final of four plans addressing the distinct transportation needs of each region of the province. In January 2020, *Connecting the Southwest: a draft transportation plan for southwestern Ontario* was released, followed by *Connecting the North: a draft transportation plan for Northern Ontario* in December 2020. *Connecting the GGH: A Transportation Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* was released in March 2022.



Eastern Ontario Transportation Infrastructure



Why Do We Need a Transportation Plan for Eastern Ontario?

Eastern Ontario's Transportation Network Today

Eastern Ontario occupies a strategic location between the Greater Golden Horseshoe in the west and Greater Montreal in the east – Canada's two largest urban centres.

Highway 401 is a major trade corridor between Montreal and Toronto. It is heavily used to move both passengers and goods, along with Highways 416 and 417, which connect the 401 to the Ottawa region. These highways serve the region's

advanced manufacturing sector, agriculture shipments and food processing as well as a vibrant logistics and warehousing sector. Highways 17 and 7 are also important corridors, connecting Ottawa to the North and to Peterborough respectively, along with Highway 11 in Muskoka District.

The rail network in eastern region plays a vital role in the transportation of goods and people and is made up of rail lines operated by Canadian

National Railway (CN), Canadian Pacific Railroad (CP), and VIA Rail (passenger service that connects Montreal and Ottawa to Toronto). In eastern Ontario, there are three international/regional airports: Ottawa's Macdonald - Cartier International Airport, Kingston Norman Rogers Airport and Muskoka Regional Airport. The Ottawa Airport is the region's only international airport; the other two, located in Kingston and Muskoka respectively, offer scheduled passenger service.

Besides numerous bridges that connect Ontario and Quebec, especially in the Gatineau region, there are three border crossings to the U.S. located at the Thousand Islands Bridge, Ogdensburg-Prescott International Bridge (which is owned and operated by the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority, a New York State public-benefit corporation) and the Three Nations Crossing associated with the Seaway International Bridge. The Thousand Islands Bridge

between Lansdowne, Ontario and Alexandria Bay, New York, is the only bridge in eastern Ontario that ranks in the top 20 Canada-U.S. border crossings, coming in 7th nationally and 5th in Ontario. The other two highway border crossings are located at Cornwall and Johnstown. They mainly serve non-truck traffic. The Cornwall Crossing connects Highway 138 in Ontario to New York State Highway 37.

Along the St. Lawrence Seaway, the three major commercial ports that ship bulk minerals and agricultural goods are located in Johnstown, Bath/Lafarge and Picton. Ferry services provide important connections to locations along the shores of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, with two of the most important being the Glenora Ferry and Wolfe Island Ferry, which carry both goods and passengers.

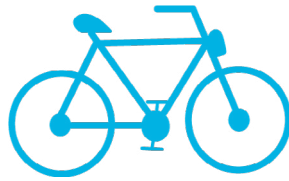




Facts about the Eastern Ontario Transportation Network



1,140 km
of 400 series highways



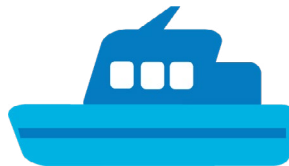
Over 2,300 km of cycling routes
as part of the province-wide cycling network



4 intercommunity bus companies



1 international airport
and 15 municipal airports



3 major ports
and 11 ferry services



Passenger and freight rail services
provided by VIA Rail, CN and CP

Challenges and Opportunities

Fighting gridlock on provincial highways in the Ottawa area

With 75% of eastern Ontario's population growth in the next 30 years expected to occur in the Ottawa area, it is clear that action must be taken to increase the capacity of current infrastructure. Gridlock is a common experience for commuters on Highway 417 driving into the city, which has the largest commuter shed in the eastern region. Across the city during the morning peak, the Queensway between the Highway 416/417 interchange and Montreal Road is regularly above capacity, creating substantial delays for commuters and leading to economic costs in lost productivity. For interprovincial commercial trucking, trucks must often travel through the downtown area, adding to local congestion.

This plan will address gridlock and plan for future growth through the rehabilitation and expansion of local highway capacity in Ottawa and throughout the region, ensuring that the regional transportation system supports the efficient movement of both people and goods well into the future.

Addressing gaps in smaller cities and rural areas

The highway and road network in eastern Ontario forms the backbone of the regional transportation system. Most trips in the region occur by car, and whether a trip involves a car, bus, or truck, all depend on a robust road network to

get people and goods where they need to go. Rehabilitation projects, new bridges and interchanges are all needed to maintain network capacity and fight gridlock.

For those who do not have access to a car, the availability of other passenger transportation options is critically important, particularly in rural communities. Many people depend on intercommunity bus services to get to their jobs in neighbouring communities, to access education or essential services, and to visit friends and family. Yet intercommunity bus services in the region have suffered from a lack of competition due to the former licencing regime, and more recently have been weakened with the departure of Greyhound and the suspension of service routes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This plan identifies improvements to the eastern Ontario highway and road network to ensure it continues to provide reliable connections across the region and beyond. It includes plans to widen sections of Highway 17, add new interchanges, repair bridges and multiple highway structures.

In support of intercommunity passenger travel, this plan also includes investments to fill service gaps by launching new local and intercommunity bus services in partnership with local providers. Through deregulation, Ontario is also supporting a streamlined safety regime for smaller vehicles such as van services providing passenger





travel to under 10 people. The plan supports the efforts of municipalities with local transit networks to extend and improve their services and encourages experimentation with newer, on-demand service models. It also recognizes that incorporating safe active transportation links including sidewalks and bike lanes along regional roads or across a bridge can better connect people with a neighbouring community.

Strengthening goods movement and unlocking economic growth

Highway 401 is the key artery of the Ontario-Quebec trade corridor, with trucks representing up to half the daily traffic volume. As the goods movement sector expands, there is an increased need for truck parking and rest stops, and interchanges that can accommodate long-combination vehicles (LCVs). At the same time, there may be opportunities to increase the use of other modes for goods movement, such as through intermodal marine and rail facilities and regional airports.

This plan not only includes actions to support the commercial trucking sector and plan for the long-term widening of the 401 corridor, but it also considers longer-term strategic opportunities for more multimodal goods movement with the development of a marine strategy and consideration of municipal airports, which can be an efficient mode for courier services and time-sensitive goods.

The Transportation Needs of Food Production

There are 7,257 farms in eastern Ontario that produced \$1.56 billion in gross farm receipts in 2020, about 9% of the province's total. Transportation planning needs to account for the unique needs of farmers, whether this means ensuring roads are wide enough to allow for the movement of farm equipment, minimizing traffic noise proximity to animals, or reducing winter salt contamination of fields. Agricultural commodities like dairy, corn and soybeans need to travel to processing facilities before going to market, and while dairy is often consumed locally, corn and soybeans grown in the east region are part of complex international supply chains. This plan ensures that farmers can move their equipment where it needs to go while not impeding the local road network.

Adapting to current and future challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts around the world and across Ontario. The pandemic has created and exacerbated financial challenges for transportation service providers and transit systems, and while we are seeing some services



beginning to recover, the longer-term impacts remain unclear. COVID-19, along with the more frequent and intense weather events associated with a changing climate, underscores the challenge of ensuring the transportation system is reliable and resilient in the face of uncertainty.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario has allocated up to \$260 million through Safe Restart Agreement (SRA) funding in three phases, and up to \$1.9 million through Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning (MTEC) funding to support municipal transit systems in eastern Ontario. Additionally, to make up for reduced gas sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021-22 Gas Tax program funding includes one-time additional funding of \$120.4 million to ensure that Gas Tax recipients across Ontario can continue to support their transit systems.

In addition to COVID-19, the current pace of technological change is leading to a transformation in transportation on a scale that parallels the invention of the automobile. The proliferation and availability of data tools, GPS and satellite imagery have spurred advances in everything from navigation, to fleet telematics, to transit integration and live traffic reports. Advances are occurring simultaneously in new forms of micro-mobility such as e-scooters, electrified transport and alternative fuels, and connected and automated vehicles.

We understand that these challenges are also opportunities to build a stronger and more resilient transportation system that has a reduced carbon footprint while building on Ontario's strengths in auto manufacturing to become an advanced manufacturing hub, for example of electric vehicles.

We have the opportunity to build a system that leverages new technologies to improve services and manage costs. As the transportation sector changes, Ontario is poised to reap economic benefits from investments in cutting edge technologies pioneered and tested in eastern Ontario.

Area X.O. and the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network

The eastern region is known for being the home of some of Canada's strongest contributors to science and technology, such as the Chalk River nuclear research facility in Deep River. Today in Ottawa, some of Canada's most exciting research in transportation technologies is occurring at [Area X.O.](#), which is tapping into the talent of the local technology sector. Area X.O. is one of seven regional technology development sites (RTDS) funded across the province by the [Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network \(OVIN\)](#). These sites are business incubators for start-ups and small- and medium-sized enterprises to develop and test connected, automated and/or electric vehicle technologies. One Area X.O. project, in collaboration with partners like Transport Canada, EasyMile, and others, successfully piloted Ontario's first-ever on-road Low-Speed Automated Shuttle (LSAS) under Ontario's Automated Vehicle Pilot Program in the fall of 2020. This trial provided valuable insight and lessons learned on how to integrate these vehicles into Ontario's transportation system in the future.



Vision:

Individuals, families and businesses across eastern Ontario have access to safe and reliable options within a transportation system that connects local communities, and contributes to the health, well-being and economic prosperity of the entire region.

A Plan for Eastern Ontario

This section outlines more than 50 actions that are being taken to achieve the transportation vision for eastern Ontario. The actions are organized across the following goal areas:

1. Connecting people and places
2. Supporting a competitive and open for business environment
3. Providing more choice and convenience
4. Improving safety and inclusion
5. Preparing for the future

This plan is intended as a living document, designed to be updated to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of people and businesses in eastern Ontario.

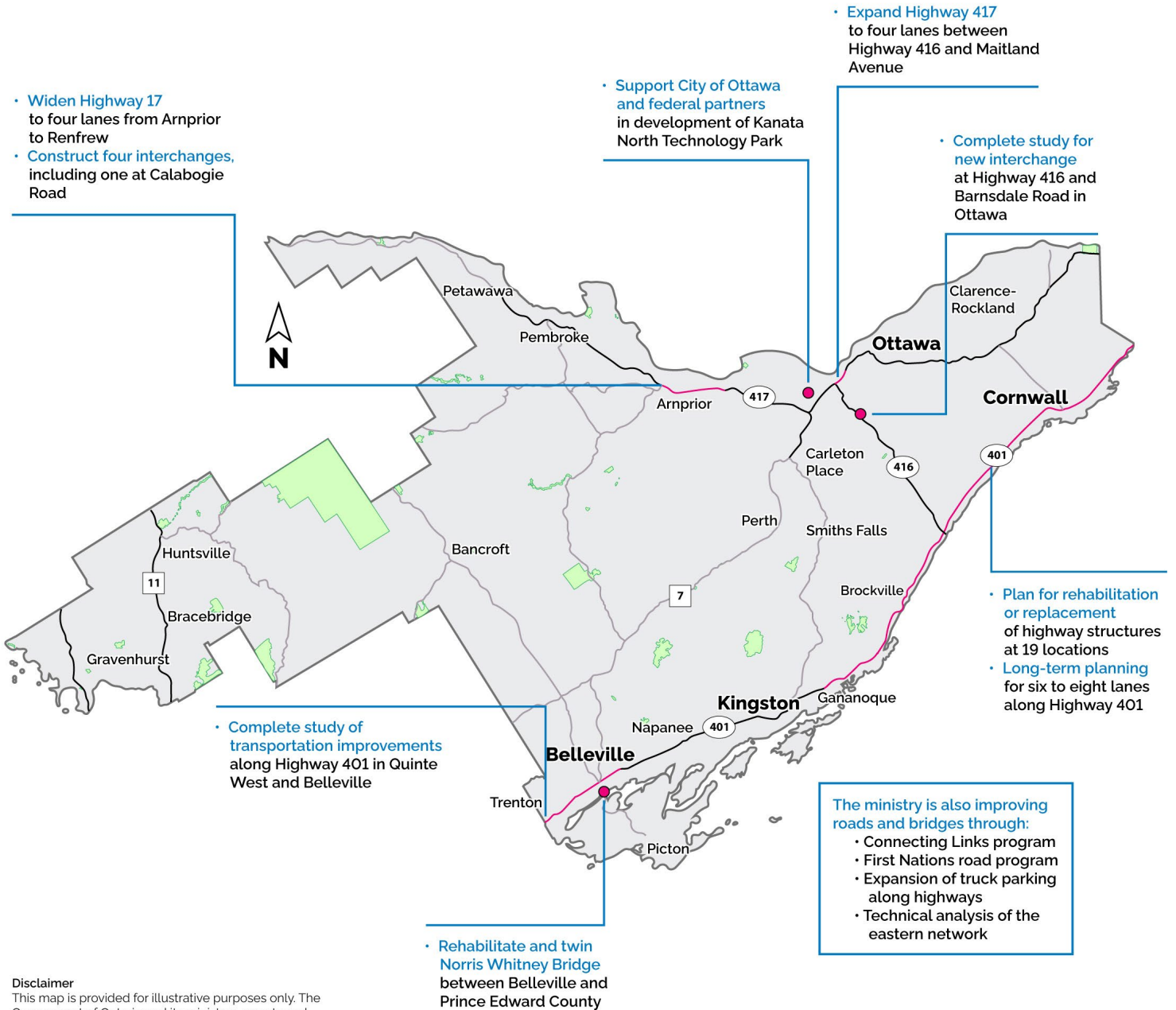
We know that the success of the plan will depend on working closely with many partners.

We are committed to working with the federal government, municipalities, Indigenous communities and organizations, Francophone residents and organizations, transportation agencies and local businesses as we move forward to implement the plan actions, gather feedback and identify opportunities for improvement.

With ongoing engagement and collaboration, the implementation of this plan will create a reliable and eAective transportation system that provides a foundation for the continued strength and prosperity of eastern Ontario.



Eastern Ontario Road and Highway Improvements



Disclaimer
 This map is provided for illustrative purposes only. The Government of Ontario and its ministers, agents and employees disclaim all responsibility for any errors, omissions and inaccuracies.

Goal 1: Connecting People and Places

Transportation systems are fundamentally about providing people and businesses with connections to get where they need to go as easily and efficiently as possible. Actions in this section of the plan help connect people and places by investing in infrastructure capacity, including by ensuring that infrastructure improvements along Highway 401 will be able to accommodate future widening

of the corridor, with work also ongoing to prioritize highway segments for expansion along the 401. Other actions include convening a task force to inform further plan development and launching a technical study of the region's transportation system that will include review of transportation needs and options for Muskoka District and Haliburton County.



Actions

- 1.** Expand Highway 417 in the City of Ottawa by widening to four continuous lanes in each direction between Highway 416 and Maitland Avenue.
- 2.** Widen Highway 17 from two to four lanes from Arnprior to Renfrew and construct four interchanges, including one at Calabogie Road.
- 3.** Rehabilitate and twin the existing Norris Whitney Bridge between Belleville and Prince Edward County. Twinning the existing bridge will ensure that there is enough capacity for forecasted traffic demand and also allow the rehabilitation of the existing structure before 2030.
- 4.** Plan for the rehabilitation or replacement of highway structures at 14 locations in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. This includes determining long-term plans for the Maitland Road, Edward Street and Highway 16 interchanges, and planning for six to eight lanes along Highway 401.
- 5.** Plan for the rehabilitation or replacement of highway structures at five locations in the area of Brockville and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. This work also includes planning for six to eight lanes along Highway 401 in Brockville.
- 6.** Complete Preliminary Design and Class Environmental Assessment (EA) study to identify rehabilitation, safety, and operational needs, and recommend transportation improvements along Highway 401 in Quinte West and Belleville.
- 7.** Complete Preliminary Design and Class EA study for a new interchange at Highway 416 and Barnsdale Road in Ottawa.
- 8.** Explore opportunities to add passing lanes on Highway 35 south of Lindsay to alleviate local congestion.
- 9.** Explore opportunities to support improvements being planned in Kanata North, as part of longer-term plans to redevelop the Kanata North Special Economic District.
- 10.** Support eastern Ontario municipalities through the Connecting Links program to repair roadways and bridges to improve connections to communities or border crossings. Ontario has provided \$25 million since 2018 to eastern Ontario municipalities. Projects in eastern Ontario include pedestrian and road safety improvements at the Highway 33 intersection in Prince Edward County, Beckwith Street renewal between Russell Street and Elmsley Street in Smiths Falls and reconstruction of O'Brien Road in Renfrew.
- 11.** Complete an update to the 2017 Environmental Assessment (EA) and an addendum to the associated report for the intersection of County Road 42 and Highway 15 to determine preferred improvements at this location.

12. Invest in on-reserve road construction and maintenance projects with First Nation communities through the First Nations Road Program. Since 2018, \$2.3 million has been provided to five First Nations communities in eastern Ontario.

13. Establish a task force of local mayors and Indigenous leaders to make recommendations to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) on additional actions to improve rail, bus and local transit services across eastern Ontario. The task force will focus on the transportation needs and opportunities in eastern Ontario with a strong emphasis on ensuring people can travel more efficiently and connect to critical services.

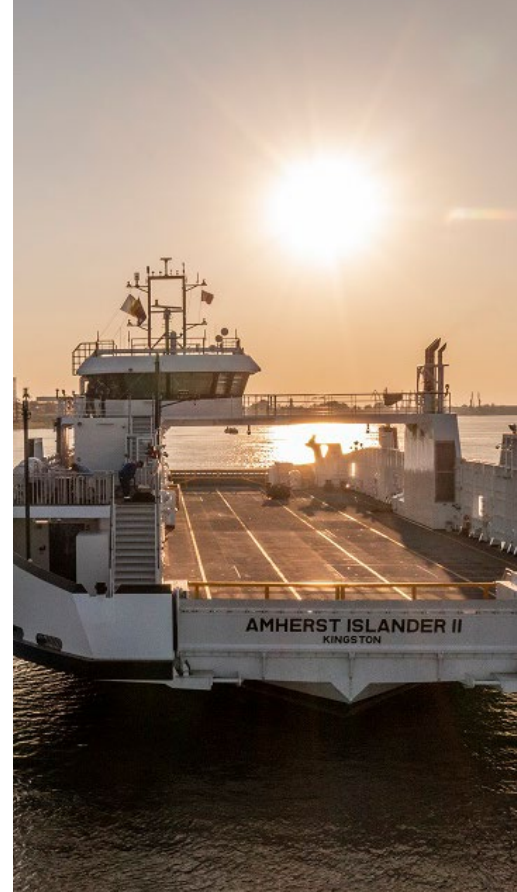
14. Continue to ensure Ontario's provincial ferry services connect communities on Wolfe Island, Amherst Island, Simcoe Island and Howe Island as well as between Glenora and Adolphustown. Ontario's first fully electric ferries, the Amherst Islander II and Wolfe Islander IV, are expected to begin service in Spring 2022. Both new vessels will feature loading areas to separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles as well as improved safety, accessibility and

sustainability features. Ontario is also procuring a new vessel for Simcoe Island that will be operational in late 2022.

15. Undertake a technical study and analysis to support the implementation and further development of the eastern transportation plan, including for the District of Muskoka and Haliburton County. This eastern Ontario transportation planning study will consider long range economic and travel demand forecasts and identify additional infrastructure, services and policies to meet future transportation needs.

16. As part of MTO's work on the eastern Ontario transportation plan technical study, undertake an assessment of needs along Highway 416, including new interchanges and rest stops.

17. As part of MTO's work on the eastern Ontario transportation plan technical study, explore the potential of an Ottawa ring road to reduce congestion in the city core.





Goal 2: Supporting a Competitive and Open for Business Environment

An efficient and reliable multimodal transportation system is critical to the economy. A strong goods movement sector helps attract investment, keeps business costs down and ensures necessary supplies are available. The actions under this goal will improve the functioning of key corridors and support the trucking industry by reducing red tape and making it easier for truckers to find parking where and when they need it. Actions also explore opportunities to leverage other modes including air and marine for greater flexibility and responsiveness to market demand.

Actions

18. Ensure highway interchanges are designed to accommodate Long Combination Vehicles (LCVs) and make improvements on existing interchanges where appropriate. In eastern Ontario, planning along Highway 401 near Belleville includes interchanges that may be able to accommodate LCVs in the future. Since each LCV replaces two conventional tractor trailers, they reduce shipping costs and cut overall fuel use and emissions. They also have a better safety record than single-trailer trucks.

19. Continue provincial highway corridor improvements for interchanges along Highway 401 near Belleville, including

working with the municipality on future opportunities such as the proposed Belleville Eastern Arterial Road (BEAR) interchange.

20. Continue to expand truck parking along provincial highways. The government is improving four rest areas in eastern Ontario including:

- Converting a former vehicle inspection facility in Gananoque to a truck rest area with 29 spaces (completed July 30, 2021).
- Increasing truck parking at the ONroute in Bainsville.
- Increasing truck parking at the Trenton South ONroute.
- Increasing truck parking at the existing rest area at Gibson Lake along Highway 17.

21. Consider mitigation measures when upgrading major rail corridor crossings (for example, Toronto to Montreal rail corridor), so that farm equipment access to fields and farm operations is not impeded.

22. Cut red tape for the commercial vehicle industry by implementing digital solutions for products and services the industry relies upon. This includes implementing online renewal for heavy commercial vehicle licence plates in 2022, continued monitoring and promotion of online products introduced by

MTO (for example, Oversize/ Overweight Permits), supporting industry in the forthcoming adoption of Electronic Logging Devices (ELDs) as a tool to support industry compliance with hours of service requirements, and continued monitoring of the use of pre-clearance and pre-screening technologies at truck inspection stations to reduce administrative delays and improve road safety.

23. Continue to support tourism in eastern Ontario through promotional partnerships with Destination Ontario and the Travel Information Centre located at the Bainsville ONroute Centre along Highway 401.

24. Support the sustainability of local airports in the region. MTO recently conducted an airport survey to update data on the role of Ontario's local airports in supporting economic development and public service delivery. The survey results will provide insight on the current state of Ontario's local and regional aviation sector, as well as a view to future needs and opportunities for supporting the multimodal transportation system.

25. Continue to work with stakeholders and operators to support the recovery and growth of the passenger cruise ship industry. This includes working with the federal government to resolve regulatory issues related to operating cruises in the Great Lakes.

26. Develop an Ontario Marine Strategy, with private and public partners, to improve the performance and sustainability of the marine transport system, including within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

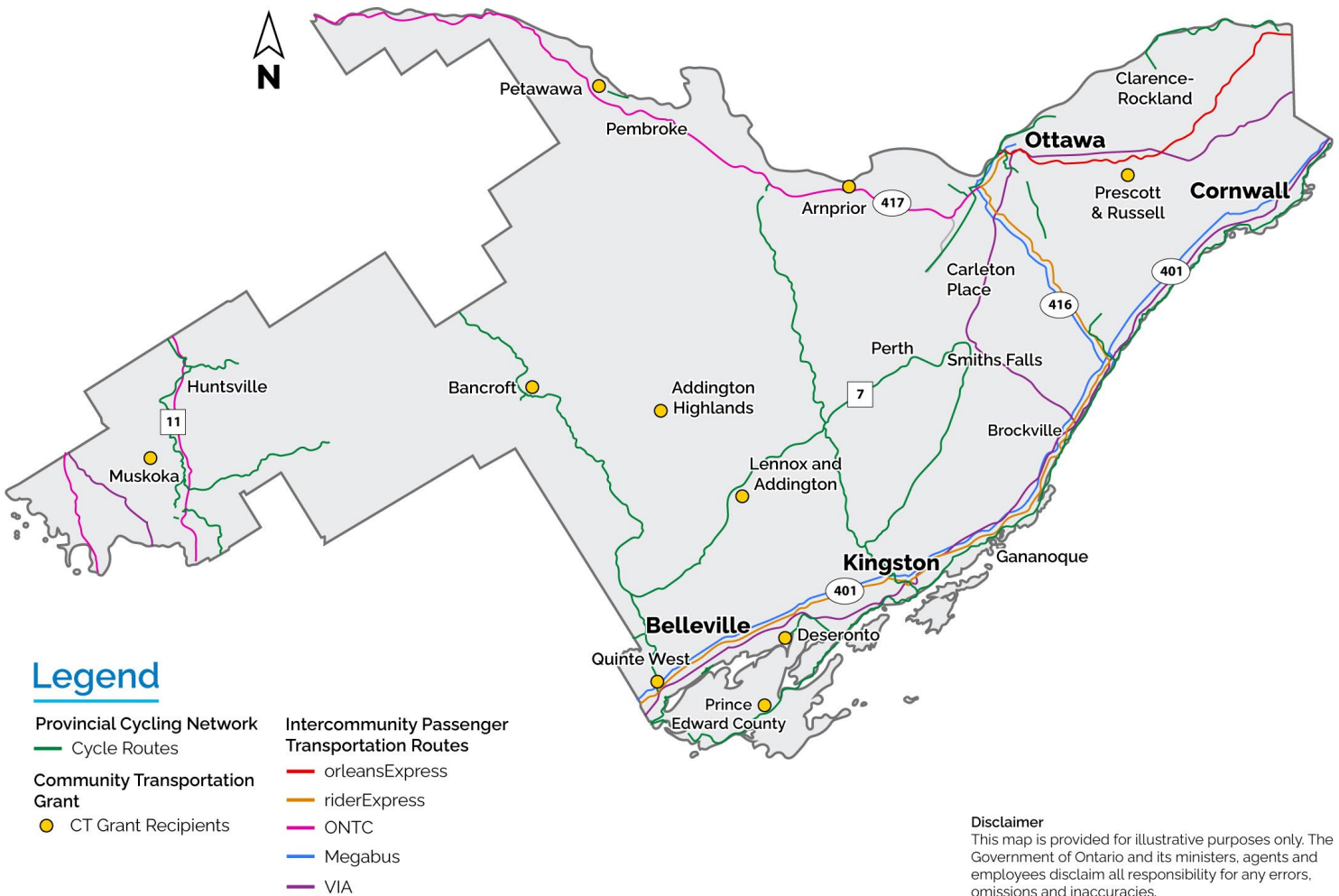


Goal 3: Providing More Choice and Convenience

Whether in a city, small town, agricultural area or the highlands, access to different travel options that are convenient means more people can get where they need to go. The actions in this section fill in service gaps in smaller communities and increase choice in larger ones. The actions also add choices and connections for tourism and recreation. A short distance from Ottawa, for example, is the largest

theme waterpark in Canada. The Rideau Canal is popular for skating in winter and boat trips along the Canal's locks in the summer. Prince Edward County is criss-crossed by multi-use trails and is very popular for its wineries, farm-to-table restaurants and Sandbanks Provincial Park. From Gananoque, visitors can take a dinner boat cruise to tour the beautiful Thousand Islands National Park.

Eastern Ontario Community Connections





Actions

27. Improve public transit through provincial contributions towards the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. As of November 2021, Infrastructure Canada has approved 21 projects across 8 eastern Ontario municipalities which will add 45 new buses, information technology upgrades including passenger counters and new active transportation facilities connected to transit.

28. Support community transportation in areas that are unserved or underserved by transit services through the Ontario Community Transportation Grant Program (CT Program). Ten municipalities in eastern Ontario are receiving up to \$8.3 million over seven years (2018-2025) to deliver local and intercommunity bus services, including some that have partnered with Indigenous communities and organizations.

29. Fund transportation programs and investments across all modes in collaboration with municipal and federal governments, including through existing programs such as Ontario's Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation Program. In 2021-22 through the Gas Tax program, approximately \$46 million will be provided to 19 municipalities to expand and improve municipal transit systems and infrastructure in eastern Ontario. This funding can be used to extend service hours, buy transit vehicles, add routes, improve accessibility or upgrade infrastructure.

30. Continue taking action to improve the province's highway network by increasing posted speed limits permanently on six sections of provincial highway, including two sections in eastern Ontario along Highway 417 from Gloucester (east of Ottawa) to the Quebec border and from Kanata to Arnprior. Each highway section has been carefully selected based on their ability to safely accommodate the higher speed limit.

31. Continue to make it easier for companies to provide intercommunity bus services. The province deregulated the sector effective July 1, 2021, which now provides for a significantly more open market for new bus service providers to enter, and for existing bus carriers to alter or offer more routes. This supports improved transportation options, economic

The Ontario Tourism Recovery Program

The Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries launched the \$100 million Ontario Tourism Recovery Program to help stabilize the province's tourism industry as it recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. The program supports eligible Ontario-based tourism businesses in the for-profit attractions, accommodations and transportation sectors that have been hardest hit by COVID-19. Funding recipients will be notified soon.

recovery and red tape reduction for business. The province also continues to support the growth of smaller providers who use vehicles carrying fewer than 10 passengers by enhancing safety and insurance oversight.

32. Work with the federal government to advance planning for their High Frequency Rail proposal to provide frequent, electrified passenger rail service from Toronto to Peterborough, Ottawa, Montréal, and Québec City.

33. Explore opportunities, such as a technical assessment or pilot program, for increased passenger rail service to better connect municipalities in the Greater

Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation Program

Ontario's Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation Program has provided funding to enable Ottawa to support service route changes and growth, as well as move forward on the design and construction of new park and ride facilities and support the purchase of 37 replacement transit buses. Belleville used its 2020 funding toward new shelters, bus stop upgrades and transit terminal expansion. Renfrew used part of its 2020 funding toward a new van for its specialized transit service.

Golden Horseshoe with the eastern region.

34. Prioritize active transportation and local transit improvements that connect the regional transit network with underserved communities, to make it safer, easier and faster for residents to access amenities, attractions, employment opportunities, educational institutions and critical services. This will include:

- Promoting walking and cycling as a first choice for short trips and access to transit stations by connecting active transportation routes to make a safe and convenient network.
- Supporting the use of on-demand micro-transit to better serve low demand conventional routes or new routes, and to improve first-mile/last-mile connections to conventional public transit services, such as bus routes and light rail transit.

35. Update the Low Speed Vehicle Pilot to reduce burden on industry and consumers and support uptake of the pilot program. Low Speed Vehicles are fully electric vehicles powered by a rechargeable motor. The pilot program supports the Made In Ontario Environment Plan objectives.





36. Improve local and regional cycling linkages by working with municipalities, Indigenous communities, private landowners, conservation authorities and provincial transportation agencies to expand cycling routes, infrastructure and amenities identified in the province-wide cycling network study. Recent accomplishments include the completion of cycling routes along Highway 28 from Lakefield to Bancroft, on Highway 118 from Loon Lake to Highway 28, along portions of Highway 33 between Kingston and Prince Edward County, as well as park and ride facilities along the Thousand Island Parkway Waterfront Trail.

37. Continue to support a world-class system of diversified trails across the region, planned and used in an environmentally responsible manner, that enhance the health and prosperity of locals and visitors. In eastern Ontario these trails serve a variety of modes and connect communities and tourism destinations in the region with Northern and central Ontario, Quebec and New York state.

Cycling Tourism in Eastern Ontario

Tourism is an important part of eastern Ontario's economy, with walking and cycling growing in popularity. In 2019, there were 2.1 million visits from domestic and overseas tourists to the region that included cycling and hiking, generating over \$662.1 million in tourism spending³.

³ Statistics Canada's National Travel Survey + Visitor Travel Survey 2019

Goal 4: Improving Safety and Inclusion

Ontario's transportation network is among the safest in North America, but there remain areas for improvement. Actions in this section increase safety and help the transportation system to better serve all users. Actions include making more real-time information available about road conditions which supports safer travel decisions. Improving safety often reinforces inclusion, as when a single bilingual electronic sign replaces smaller, separate English and French ones, reducing distractions and making wayfinding easier for everyone. And some actions are about making sure that transportation decisions and investments consider all potential users' needs and all who may be impacted by a project.

Actions

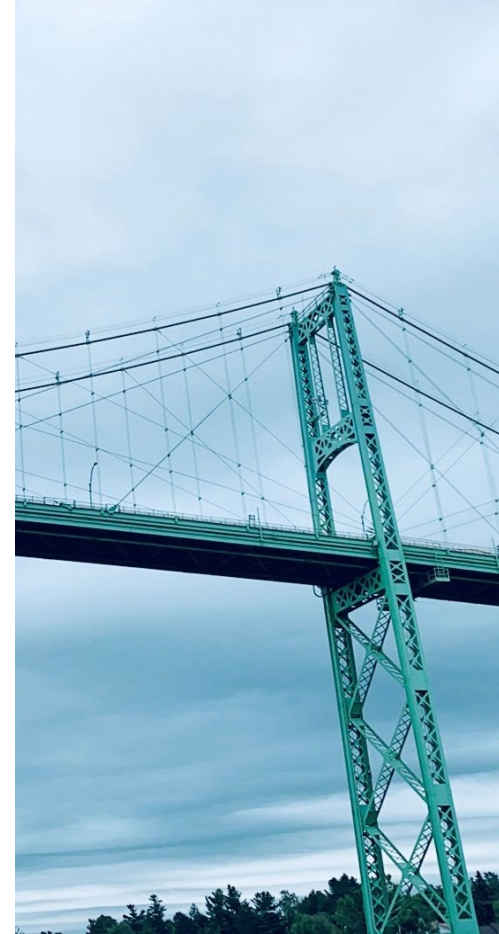
38. Increase availability of near real-time highway information to keep travellers aware of current conditions, including collisions, road and weather conditions, snow plow locations, construction activities and emergency detour routes. The Ontario 511 mobile app is available for free for all drivers and offers a 'trucker mode' to help truck drivers find places where they can safely stop and rest, eat at truck-friendly restaurants, use washrooms and more.

39. Invest in larger electronic signage to deliver important messages to road users in both English and French. This initiative will improve the delivery of French-language services to Francophone motorists, and by

replacing separate English and French variable message signs (VMS) with a single larger full colour bilingual VMS, it will also enhance safety by reducing the frequency of roadside distractions. The province is currently supporting the design and installation of three new bilingual VMS in frequently travelled designated bilingual areas of eastern Ontario, and planning for new installations at 11 more sites along Highways 7, 17, 401, and 417.

40. Raise awareness of human trafficking by working in partnership with the private sector, including the province's ONroute operators and the commercial trucking industry, as well as MTO agencies as appropriate. The travelling public and front-line workers will be encouraged to recognize the signs of suspicious activity and report them to authorities. Actions include investing in added lighting and security cameras for rest areas, promoting anti-human trafficking information and resources at transportation hubs, engaging Ontario's trucking industry as a key partner in combatting human trafficking, and providing training opportunities for truck drivers and Ministry of Transportation staff.

41. Continue to work with Indigenous communities and organizations to facilitate early and meaningful engagement and consultation on projects, including identifying how reconciliation will be incorporated.





42. Adapt and respond to emerging commercial vehicle safety priorities in Ontario. This includes continuing to work with the commercial vehicle sector and policing partners, and enforcing safety requirements for commercial vehicles including trucks, tractors or buses on-road by MTO enforcement officers and police officers, as well as through facility audits.

43. Expand services to support Ontario's important Franco-Ontarian community. As of September 2020, individuals can request their Francophone name be printed with French characters on their driver's licence or Ontario photo card. This is an example of the French Language Services Strategy in action.

44. Work with municipalities and private sector partners to improve lighting at road/rail crossings, commuter parking lots and rest areas, and find ways to incorporate alternative sources of energy such as solar power in remote locations.

45. Address the threats and challenges of invasive vegetation species such as Wild Parsnip along provincial highways. Wild Parsnip is a noxious weed, common in eastern Ontario, that grows rapidly within the highway right-of-way. Serious rashes, burns or blisters can occur on a person's skin when exposed to the sap in combination with sunlight. The province will continue to develop a strategy to

Indigenous Wayfinding on Ottawa's LRT System

An Algonquin Wayfinding Wheel was unveiled in 2021 at the Pimisi O-Train Station and City Hall in Ottawa, and will be installed at all O-Train stations. The Wayfinding Wheel is inspired by the traditional four sacred directions and reflects Algonquin culture and the history of the Algonquin territory. It was designed through a participatory process involving Algonquin Elders and community members from Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation and Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, as well as representatives from the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) organization. The province has provided funding support to this initiative through an up to \$600 million commitment to the Ottawa Light Rail Transit Stage 1 project.⁴



⁴ *To learn more about the Wayfinding Wheel installations, please see the [City of Ottawa news release](#).*

manage invasive species with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry to effectively manage invasive species vegetation along provincial roadsides.

46. Establish accessible signage and wayfinding standards that recognize areas of Indigenous cultural, ecological and spiritual significance, including communities and place names. This may include accessible signage and wayfinding provided in multiple languages where appropriate to advance Indigenous tourism in Ontario.

47. Develop a framework for transportation access and inclusion that will guide MTO in considering the experiences of underserved people or communities, such as racialized groups and Indigenous peoples, inclusive of age, gender, income and persons with disabilities, in its transportation decisions.

48. Consider the movement and safety risks associated with large, slow-moving farm equipment and transportation of agricultural products to market in road and rail design, such as shoulder, curb and traffic circle design, speed limits and signage.

49. Develop and follow best practices for highway planning and design that consider wildlife crossing opportunities. Such highway planning design and construction processes protect essential ecological processes and public health and safety, while minimizing environmental and social impacts, and providing recreational opportunities. In eastern Ontario, recent improvements to Highway 15 included passage and exclusion systems to protect Blanding's Turtle (federally designated as an endangered species), including two concrete box culverts and permanent fencing.



Goal 5: Preparing for the Future

Eastern Ontario needs a transportation network that is resilient and reliable in the face of extreme weather and other events, that embraces innovation and technological change, and prepares the region for the increased use of drone technology and electrified and automated vehicles. With many people increasingly working and connecting with others from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, these actions include investments in broadband and cellular networks to create a level playing field in services across the region.

Actions

50. Use the most up-to-date climate data and information, including findings from Ontario's provincial level Climate Change Impact Assessment (PCCIA), to help ensure that transportation infrastructure takes into account climate change impacts and risks.

51. Review locations for alternative fueling stations for public use, including electric and hydrogen. This will support potential private sector commercial partnerships and competitiveness as well as contribute to ensuring our clean electricity system is ready to accommodate electric and innovative transportation. Recently, Ontario announced a

partnership to install electric vehicle charging stations at all ONroute locations, including several locations in eastern Ontario such as Odessa, Mallorytown and Morrisburg.

52. Develop a Transportation Electrification Policy to support electric vehicle (EV) uptake in Ontario. The development of the policy will be informed by stakeholder engagement, including through the Transportation Electrification Council. The Council was established in fall 2021 with representation from industry leaders and community stakeholders to identify opportunities in the areas of charging infrastructure, awareness-raising, information on upfront costs and the supply of EVs in Ontario. This dovetails with the Driving Prosperity provincial commitment to position Ontario as a North American leader in the production of hybrid and electric vehicles and batteries, as well as with Ontario's announcement in October 2020 that it would provide \$295 million to support Ford Motor Company's \$1.8 billion investment to transform its Oakville Assembly Complex into an electric vehicle manufacturing hub.

53. Invest in improvements to broadband internet and cellular infrastructure in eastern





Ontario, including in Indigenous communities, as part of a commitment to ensure all Ontarians have access to high-speed internet by the end of 2025. This is part of a nearly \$4 billion investment in Ontario's first-ever broadband and cellular strategy. High-speed internet and cellular connectivity are essential in enabling rural Canadians to work, learn and keep in touch with family and friends – particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a shift to online activities. In 2021, Ontario announced a joint investment of over \$362 million to bring high-speed internet to 90,124 rural households in eastern Ontario. Ontario is also supporting a cellular connectivity project led by the Eastern Ontario Regional Network and Rogers, with over \$300 million to significantly improve mobile access across the region.

54. Prepare Ontario's transportation system for the safe deployment of connected and automated vehicle (CV/AV) technology to increase access to mobility options and boost economic development by:

- Updating the legislative and regulatory framework to support CV/AV adoption.
- Considering cross-border initiatives to prepare for interjurisdictional travel.
- Engaging with stakeholders and the public through a series of discussion papers to better understand the key issues and impacts of CV/AV deployment.

55. Explore the use of advanced air mobility (AAM) technology, including drones, for shipping goods, providing better connections to remote communities and improving safety services. The province is working with federal partners to get a better understanding of AAM and how it can support Ontario's transportation goals. Potential safety uses for AAM include the ability to inspect infrastructure, monitor forest fires and investigate road collisions.

56. Invest \$56.4 million over the next four years to create the new Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN). This investment will help accelerate the development of next generation electric, connected and autonomous vehicle and mobility technologies that contribute to a lower environmental and carbon footprint and support the development of made-in-Ontario advanced automotive and smart mobility technology.

Area X.O. tests drones

Located in Ottawa, Area X.O. is one of the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network's (OVIN) seven regional technology development sites (RTDS). Area X.O. includes a drone testing zone that provides over 1,000 acres of private land to safely pilot drone projects and use cases.

The City of Ottawa



Population
1.0M
City of Ottawa



Land Mass
2,796 km²



Population Forecast
40% Growth Rate, 1.4M by 2046



Roads
6,000 km
(city owned)



Airports
1 international,
3 municipal



Active Transportation
2,150 km of
sidewalks, 365 km
of bike lanes



Public Transit
900 buses with 57
stations, 56.5 km
LRT line with 37
stations (stage 1,2)

The City of Ottawa is the nation's capital and the largest city in eastern Ontario. Its diversified local economy hosts four post-secondary institutions and a vibrant technology sector. It is a major tourist and business hub with one of the largest convention centres in the province and a popular National Hockey League team. It has a complex multimodal transportation network, which includes dedicated higher-order transit in the form of the Transitway bus rapid transit (BRT) and O-Train light rail transit (LRT) systems.

Active transportation and public transit are used more extensively in Ottawa than in the rest of the region. In an online survey that was held to support this plan's development, 44% of Ottawa respondents (versus 33% across the region) reported using active transportation to get to work, purchase groceries or attend a medical appointment. Ottawa respondents also indicated they used this mode more often than a private car.

The province has committed up to \$600 million towards Stage 1 and up to \$1.2 billion towards Stage 2 of the City of Ottawa's LRT project. In December 2021, the province appointed the Honourable Justice William Hourigan as Commissioner to lead the public inquiry into the commercial and technical circumstances that led to the breakdown

and derailment of Stage 1 LRT. While the inquiry is underway, the expansion of this critical transit project continues and will play a key role in the city's new Transportation Master Plan, which seeks to provide flexible, safe options for all residents while helping the city to meet its climate change goals.

The Rideau Canal and Ottawa River add to the city's natural beauty, but they also create challenges for commercial truck traffic crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau into Quebec, adding to downtown gridlock. The province stands ready to collaborate with the city, the Province of Quebec, and the National Capital Commission (NCC) on solutions to downtown gridlock and interprovincial crossings. The eastern Ontario transportation plan contains many actions that will complement those in the city's Transportation Master Plan and help Ottawa to achieve its transportation goals. The plan will manage growth and add to quality of life in part by expanding capacity on Highway 417 so that commuters can spend more time with their families instead of stuck in gridlock. It will expand the availability and convenience of multimodal options with funding for more local transit and active transportation infrastructure. And with an eye to the future, it includes investment in new transportation technologies and preparations for their deployment.



Highlights of actions in this plan that respond to the needs of Ottawa-area residents include:

- Action 1 – Widening Highway 417 to four lanes between Highway 416 and Maitland Avenue
- Action 7 – Completing preliminary design and class environmental assessment for a new interchange at Highway 416 and Barnsdale Road
- Actions 15, 16, and 17– Undertake technical analysis of the eastern transportation network including an assessment of needs such as new interchanges and rest stops along Highway 416 and the potential of a ring road around Ottawa
- Action 24 – Supporting the sustainability of local airports
- Action 29 – Expanding transit infrastructure and services with Gas Tax program funding. In Ottawa, these funds have over the years enabled service route changes and growth, contributed to design and construction of new park-and-ride facilities, and supported the purchase of 37 replacement transit buses
- Action 34 – Prioritizing active transportation and local transit improvements that connect the regional transit network to underserved communities (see e-scooter pilot call out box).
- Action 42 - Adapting and responding to emerging commercial vehicle safety priorities in Ontario
- Action 50 - Using the most up-to-date climate data and information, including findings from Ontario's provincial level Climate Change Impact Assessment (PCCIA), to help ensure that transportation infrastructure takes into account climate change impacts and risks
- Action 55 – Exploring the use of drone technology for shipping goods and improving safety
- Action 56 – Investing \$56.4 million over the next

four years to create the new Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), supporting made-in-Ontario advanced automotive and mobility technologies and the lower carbon footprint that deployment can bring

Collectively, these actions will make the lives of Ottawa-area residents easier by shortening their commute, providing them with more travel options and ensuring all travel options are safer and more convenient. These actions along with the others in this plan will contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the network, support the needs of businesses by keeping goods moving across a variety of modes and ensure opportunities for made-in-Ontario advances are given the support they need to add to our collective prosperity. At the same time, the actions contained here are not a final list. They will be improved and supplemented with further actions as feedback is gathered during plan implementation. This plan is a living document and it will continue to be updated with the help of our many partners.

E-scooter pilot project

In January 2020, the province launched a 5-year pilot project allowing e-scooters on public roads, subject to municipal requirements. Ottawa introduced its e-scooter by-law in June 2020 under the province's pilot regulation, with several companies including Bird Canada, Lime and Neuron participating in the 2021 season. E-scooters can reduce traffic congestion, provide a way for residents to get around their communities and provide first and last mile connections to transit, particularly in areas where the trip is too long to walk.

Working Together with Partners

Collaboration and partnerships will be essential to the successful implementation of this plan and the ongoing development of the actions it contains. This is of particular importance in the National Capital Region where the governments of Canada, Quebec and Ontario each have their respective areas of jurisdiction, along with the cities of Ottawa, Gatineau and the National Capital Commission (NCC). The NCC is responsible for areas of federal urban planning, conservation and improvement of interprovincial bridge crossings: there are five bridges in the capital region that have a significant role in connecting Ontario to Quebec.

The formation of a regional transportation task force, one of the actions in this plan, will provide a venue for local municipal and Indigenous leaders to discuss transportation needs and opportunities in the region, and provide additional advice to the province on how to ensure people can travel more efficiently and connect to critical services.

Ontario has a legal obligation to consult with Indigenous peoples where it contemplates decisions or actions that may adversely impact asserted or established Aboriginal or treaty rights. We are committed to working together with Indigenous communities and organizations as we implement this plan.

We also remain committed to identifying and removing barriers for people with disabilities and will continue to work with government, service providers and industry so that actions in this plan will follow the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and federal accessibility legislation.

Next Steps

Connecting the East: a draft transportation plan for eastern Ontario delivers on our promise to build a safe, connected and affordable transportation network tailored to the needs of the eastern region.

Implementing the actions in this plan and collaborating with partners and stakeholders on future improvements will help connect local communities, fight gridlock on our highway network, add more public transit and active transportation options, support a globally-competitive economy, and increase the safety and resilience of the regional transportation network.

We know there is more to be done, and many of the actions in this plan are underway but not yet complete. This plan is a living document that will be updated as we receive more feedback and identify opportunities for improvement.

An important component of the work going forward is the action to undertake a technical study that will provide long-range economic and travel demand forecasts. This work and the accompanying analysis will help to identify additional infrastructure, services and policies to meet future transportation needs.

The eastern plan is the final of four regional plans, following the southwestern and Northern Ontario plans released in 2020, and the plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe released in March 2022.

Together, these plans will set out a path to achieve a better-connected and more efficient transportation network across the province, providing the foundation for a healthy and prosperous Ontario.

Ministry of Transportation
ontario.ca/easterntransportation

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