

DRAFT 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy

July 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) are seeking comments and feedback on the draft 2041 Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy. Your insights will inform the final Strategy, which will guide a sustainable multimodal transportation system to meet the needs of the people who live and work in northern Ontario.

A modern and efficient multimodal transportation system is critical to supporting northern Ontario’s communities and industries. The final Strategy will support economic development in northern Ontario and the implementation of the transportation policies in the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario 2011. It will guide infrastructure, policies, services, information and partnerships to help ensure that the transportation system supports northern prosperity over the coming 25 years.



The draft Strategy sets out a vision, goals and directions to improve and transform the transportation system—air, rail, road and marine—in northern Ontario. The directions, which are listed below and explained in detail in the draft Strategy, are intended to both maintain the current system and fill gaps to improve the system. The draft Strategy also identifies samples of work underway or that could potentially be included in an action plan that will accompany the final Strategy.

The draft Strategy’s vision, goals and directions address a wide range of challenges that are unique to northern Ontario, across all transportation modes. Transportation is closely linked to the quality of life in northern Ontario and to the economic vibrancy of northern Ontario communities, businesses and industries. Taken together, the directions are intended to guide the improvement of vital connections and traveller safety, make daily travel easier and support investment in northern Ontario.

Remote and Far North communities face particular transportation challenges, with related impacts on the cost of daily living. Their means of access are limited—air travel and winter ice roads are the main options—and are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The draft Strategy includes directions to enhance transportation reliability to and from these communities in the short-term and long-term.



The draft Strategy also seeks to leverage emerging technologies and data, keep pace with new ways of doing business and help northern Ontario capitalize on economic opportunities. This flexibility and innovation will increase the ability of the transportation system to perform in changing conditions, reduce its impacts on the environment, help mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, and support healthy communities. As the transportation system evolves it is intended to support people as they move through their daily lives, facilitate businesses in the movement of goods and services, and enable tourists and visitors to experience northern destinations and attractions.

Ways to get involved and share your input are detailed at the end of the Executive Summary.

Key Facts About Northern Ontario

More than $\frac{1}{3}$
proportion of Ontario's
Indigenous population
living in northern Ontario

118
First Nation
reserves

56%
proportion of northern
Ontario residents living in
its 5 largest urban areas

Over 802,000
square kilometres
of land

Almost 90 %
proportion of Ontario's
land mass

808,000
approximate population

11,000
kilometres of
provincial highway

3,160
kilometres of
winter roads

8,200
kilometres of
rail lines

3
major ports

67
public airports

\$34 billion
estimated GDP of
northern Ontario in 2011
(about 5% of
Ontario's total GDP)

2041 Vision:

Northern Ontario's transportation system is responsive to economic, social and environmental needs and change, and is transformative in supporting new economic activity, healthy communities and a cleaner environment.

Goals of the Draft Northern Ontario Multimodal Transportation Strategy:

Goal 1: Connected and Prosperous	Increase and modernize transportation options to support everyday living and economic activity in northern Ontario.
Goal 2: Safe and Reliable	Enhance traveller safety and system reliability and minimize travel delays and complications.
Goal 3: Address Remote and Far North Challenges	Work with remote and Far North communities to address unique transportation needs with more reliable connections between communities and to the all-season ground transportation network
Goal 4: Integrated and Innovative	Anticipate and respond to economic, technological, environmental and social change to link people, resources and businesses.
Goal 5: Healthy and Sustainable	Create a cleaner and more sustainable transportation system in northern Ontario by reducing GHG and other environmental and human health impacts.



Goal 1: Connected and Prosperous **Increase and modernize transportation options to support everyday living and economic activity in northern Ontario**

1.1 Establish a network of core intercommunity passenger bus services across northern Ontario, connecting major centres

Many residents in northern Ontario are dependent upon intercommunity bus services—regularly scheduled motor coach services between regional centres—to access essential services. A core network of intercommunity passenger bus services that offers an increase in daytime pick-up and drop-off times is fundamental to mobility options.

1.2 Connect and improve community transportation services and make them available to more people

Community-based transportation services are a critical link to meet the local transportation needs within small and rural communities, particularly where there is limited or no public transit available. Community transportation services supplement conventional transit with more daytime pick-up and drop-off times, and schedules that allow for more flexibility for target populations.

1.3 Reinvigorate passenger rail service where appropriate

Trips by passenger rail may provide a viable alternative to highway trips where a rail line exists, where it can provide more direct access than other modes, where sufficient passenger demand exists and where service providers are interested in exploring service. Ontario will work with the federal government to review and evaluate rail service business cases, where appropriate.

1.4 Four-lane or twin segments of the Trans-Canada Highway to improve reliability of travel

Travel on the Trans-Canada Highway can be severely impeded when critical sections are temporarily closed (e.g., due to collisions or weather conditions). Ontario will work closely with the federal government to address core gaps where four-laning and twinning would provide opportunities to bypass closures.

1.5 Increase highway capacity based on travel demand, safety objectives and other applicable standards, to support efficient goods movement and passenger travel

Initiatives to enhance, expand and/or improve highway capacity will respond to traffic volume growth as well as other factors such as community well-being and industry needs.

1.6 Align infrastructure standards and maintenance service levels with increasing commercial vehicle usage along corridors that are essential for current and future goods movement

Upgrades may be required over time to bridges and major gravel/surface-treated highways and roads to accommodate heavy trucks accessing mines and other resource-based activities. The province will ensure northern Ontario's transportation system continues to support the evolving goods movement sector.

1.7 Establish a preferred highway route for oversize/overweight (O/O) commercial vehicles and support appropriate O/O movements

Certain routes are difficult for oversize/overweight vehicles to travel due to highway widths and reduced capacity of bridges and/or overpasses. Ontario will pursue opportunities to better facilitate the movement of these vehicles and help manage their impacts on other users of the highway system.

1.8 Improve quality of roads outside of the provincial highway network that connect to First Nation communities, where appropriate

Thousands of kilometres of roads in northern Ontario fall outside of the province's jurisdiction, including a number of roads used by First Nation communities for access between their communities and provincial highway routes. Ontario will work with the federal government to clarify core responsibilities to facilitate future enhancements to these roads where they provide critical access to Indigenous communities.

1.9 Increase and enhance economic opportunities for Indigenous peoples and businesses in government-related transportation activities, programs and projects

This is a cross-cutting direction, which, with others, seeks to help improve Indigenous peoples' everyday lives and enhance economic development opportunities, in the spirit of reconciliation.

1.10 Support and enhance municipal airports' role in helping to deliver important public services, connect people and move goods

Many municipal airports in northern Ontario do not generate adequate revenue to cover operating and long-term capital costs. The province will work to improve the stability of northern Ontario's municipal airport network.

1.11 Develop aviation policy in Ontario to support this evolving and important part of the transportation system, including helicopters, Unmanned Aerial Systems and other potential aircraft

Aviation is a federally-regulated activity. However, aviation policy is needed concerning such matters as airport or helipad funding, the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems and aviation transportation planning in northern Ontario.

1.12 Increase market access to rail and marine modes for freight transport, where appropriate

Investments in logistics and transportation activities are primarily led by the private sector based on their own evaluation of the long-term business case. Stakeholders and partners have identified that marine and rail networks that serve bulk and heavy freight shipments in northern Ontario may be underutilized and could have the potential to respond to the needs of growing and emerging northern industries, while increasing efficiency and reducing the environmental impact of freight movement. Ontario will work with partners to help facilitate and enable optimal use of all transportation modes, as appropriate, for bulk and heavy shipments.

1.13 Support enhanced marine tourism businesses in northern Ontario

Overcoming challenges posed by some federal shipping and border crossing regulations would support growth in marine tourism. Ontario will work with the federal government to facilitate new opportunities for marine tourism on the Great Lakes.



Goal 2: Safe and Reliable **Enhance traveller safety and system reliability and minimize travel delays and complications**

2.1 Improve trip-planning and real-time travel information for road users

Being informed and prepared before setting out or while travelling on the highway can increase safety and reduce incidents. Ontario will work with public and private sector partners to improve communication about conditions, incidents, activities and requirements affecting travel in northern Ontario.

2.2 Expand cellular service across the transportation network in northern Ontario

There is a need to provide critical safety information in areas where there are cellular service gaps, and to reduce these gaps over time through partnerships among the public, non-profit and private sectors. Improved communications and coverage will assist travellers during emergency situations.

2.3 Expand and improve provision of rest areas, laybys and roadside pull-offs

Rest areas and roadside pull-offs can help reduce drivers' fatigue, enable commercial vehicles to comply with hours-of-service regulations, and provide a safe and convenient alternative to parking along the side of the highway. Ontario will work to address gaps in the provision of year-round rest areas, laybys and pull-offs.

2.4 Make strategic investments in the highway network that will reduce impacts on drivers during highway incidents and closures

Ontario helps ensure the safety of road users through continued investment in road rehabilitation and will seek opportunities for additional places for vehicles to turn back and/or access alternative routes in the event of an unanticipated road closure.

2.5 Increase the safety for people accessing intercommunity bus services through provision of amenities that better meet user needs

Improvements to bus terminals and stops can enhance safety, accessibility and the overall travel experience, as well as encourage use of bus services. Ontario will support efforts to improve the safety of bus stops along intercommunity bus routes.



Goal 3: Address Remote and Far North Challenges
Work with remote and Far North communities to address unique transportation needs with more reliable connections between communities and to the all-season ground transportation network

3.1 Renew remote airports' basic infrastructure to support their essential functions

Northern Ontario's remote airports provide the only all-season access to and from most Far North communities. Capital reinvestment is needed to continue to sustain this vital function and improve equipment, facilities and capacity. Ontario will work with the federal government to sustain and improve the critical function that remote airports provide to their communities.

3.2 Improve operational functions of remote airports, including enhancing their reliability

Continuous improvements to remote airport operations will support their critical role and build understanding of how they operate. In particular, enhancements will improve operations during times of emergency.

3.3 Enhance the quality of winter roads and extend their operating season through improved infrastructure, programs, maintenance and training

In the face of warming temperatures and shorter winter seasons, winter roads will need to be constructed, maintained and operated to high standards to ensure they continue to provide important transportation links to First Nation communities for as long as possible. Ontario, the federal government and First Nations can work together to support these efforts.

3.4 Provide seasonal multi-purpose drop locations for goods and laybys along the winter road network to reduce risks and improve the movement of people and goods

Drivers need places to rest, pull-off to make phone calls or wait out poor weather. Commercial drivers also need places to store goods when winter road conditions are poor and unable to accommodate heavy freight shipments. Ontario, the federal government and First Nations can work together to provide such infrastructure where technically feasible.

3.5 Support increased enforcement on winter roads and for remote air travel

Collaboration with partners is needed to find effective ways to reduce the potential for smuggling of contraband items into remote communities, and to better enforce laws for drivers on winter roads.

3.6 Collaboratively pursue the expansion of the all-season road network in partnership with interested First Nation communities and other levels of government and partners

As winter road corridors become increasingly vulnerable to climate change, there is interest among some First Nation communities in the Far North to pursue all-season roads. Ontario supports incremental expansion of the all-season road network and connecting First Nation communities to the provincial highway network.

3.7 Continue coordinated land use planning and transportation planning in the Far North, working collaboratively with First Nation communities and INAC

Coordination of transportation planning will help to improve quality of life, enable economic opportunities, mitigate impacts of climate change and enhance the transportation system, while minimizing its footprint on the natural and cultural heritage system. Ontario will continue to work with First Nations to prepare land use plans that will clarify where development can occur and where land is dedicated for protection.



Goal 4: Integrated and Innovative
Anticipate and respond to economic, technological, environmental and social change to link people, resources and businesses

4.1 Expand broadband infrastructure in rural and remote communities in northern Ontario to enable enhanced communications for people and transportation providers

Improvements to broadband service levels will benefit many users, including residents, transportation providers, industry, governments and others. Ontario will continue to work with partners to make incremental enhancements to broadband service levels in rural and remote communities, and at remote airports.

4.2 Deliver services remotely through telecommunications or locally when possible, to decrease the need for people to travel

Increases in remote access to government and social services will mean fewer lengthy trips to urban centres and reduced financial, environmental and opportunity costs. Ontario will work to expand digital or other innovative delivery of services.

4.3 Promote local production of food and goods to reduce long-distance transportation needs

Ontario supports approaches to facilitate local production and distribution of goods and provision of services, which can foster prosperous, resilient and sustainable communities, and help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

4.4 Facilitate the adoption of new and emerging innovative methods of goods movement, where appropriate, such as airships and hoverbarges

The adoption of new technologies can potentially reduce environmental impacts and enhance the efficiency of goods movement and passenger travel, particularly to areas of the Far North where all-season road access does not exist. Ontario will monitor and prepare for industry's adoption of new transportation technologies as new solutions develop.

4.5 Gather data, and increase monitoring, knowledge and forecasting to support long-term transportation planning

The draft Strategy supports data gathering at regular intervals and forecasting to increase understanding of climate change implications and to evaluate whether the transportation system is continuing to meet user needs. Providing open transportation data also supports a range of user-based benefits.



Goal 5: Healthy and Sustainable
Create a cleaner and more sustainable transportation system in northern Ontario by reducing GHG and other environmental and human health impacts

5.1 Reduce GHG emissions from car and truck transportation in northern Ontario by decreasing reliance on diesel and gasoline fuels and shifting to use of electric and lower-carbon fuels

While long-distance travel is necessary for people and goods moving throughout northern Ontario, emissions can be reduced through a shift to electric vehicles and low-carbon fuel sources, and more efficient vehicles. Ontario will help facilitate this shift through initiatives such as investing in associated infrastructure.

5.2 Increase the use of renewable energy throughout the northern transportation system, including for vehicular travel, at airports and for remote communities

A multi-faceted approach is required to reduce the environmental footprint for all modes of travel while at the same time expanding economic development opportunities in northern Ontario, which may be accompanied by increased travel. Increasing the use of renewable energy for transportation operations is an important part of this approach.

5.3 Consider impacts and risks associated with climate change when making decisions on transportation infrastructure investments for northern Ontario

Initial decisions about the type and location of new infrastructure investments should be guided and informed by a strong understanding of the risks associated with climate change. The province will continue working to improve the resiliency of northern Ontario's transportation system through data gathering, planning and strategic investments.

5.4 Increase awareness, prevention and response related to transport of dangerous goods and spills

Monitoring, communicating and enforcing the safe transport of dangerous goods is important to ensuring the health of northern Ontario residents and the environment.

5.5 Increase cycling opportunities by connecting the province-wide cycling network, accommodating cycling where appropriate in road rights-of-way and supporting the construction of cycling infrastructure in cities, towns and First Nation communities

Accommodating cycling can help make it easier and safer to travel by bike. Cycling in northern Ontario is important to support more sustainable transportation options and economic development. Ontario is taking action through #CycleON: Ontario's Cycling Strategy to support active transportation in northern Ontario.

5.6 Encourage planning for compact urban form that supports active transportation options such as walking or cycling and increases the viability of local transit

Compact urban form is encouraged for major centres in the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario 2011. Compact urban form supports active transportation and transit, and potentially reduces GHG emissions and increases health benefits, by conveniently locating services and amenities and reducing travel distances.

5.7 Improve wildlife safety and decrease the impact of roads on natural heritage and biodiversity

Conserving resources and maintaining biodiversity are essential to the health of northern communities. Measures to reduce wildlife impacts could also protect motorists from injury, prevent property damage and minimize habitat fragmentation. Ontario will continue working to decrease wildlife impacts through infrastructure planning and design.

We Are Seeking Your Comments

The draft Strategy is being distributed for public comment to help inform the development of the final Strategy and Action Plan. When the final Strategy is released at the end of 2017, it is intended that a more detailed Action Plan will accompany it.

MTO and MNDM are seeking your feedback on the goals and directions in the draft Strategy. Do they capture the key areas and partnerships needed to ensure that the transportation system in northern Ontario meets users' needs over the next 25 years? Recognizing that not everything can be achieved at once, tell us which directions are most important over the next ten years, to help focus the Action Plan.

Please send us your comments and feedback by September 15, 2017. There are many ways to participate.

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