

Committee Brief

House of Commons Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Study on High Frequency Rail (HFR)

Greater Toronto Airports Authority



Recommendations for the Committee:

We recommend that HFR Project **advance a partnership with the GTAA to plan and design a HFR connection to Toronto Pearson airport**, which will create a much needed second major transportation hub for the region.

It would be a missed opportunity if the HFR Project did not explore **linking this transformational national rail project with the largest and the most critically important airport in Canada**. Especially given the large amount of enabling infrastructure already invested in adjacent rail corridors, and growing demand for better inter-modal transit connectivity in the region.

As the GTAA continues to develop the airport to meet increased passenger demand, and the regional population grows, with thousands of new housing developments being built, there is both a need and opportunity for future rail connectivity and expansion.

Recommendation #1 - *Commit to linking nationally important federal transportation air & rail modes as a core priority in the HFR co-development phase.*

Recommendation #2 - *Partner with the GTAA to plan and design a HFR connection at Toronto Pearson to develop a second major transportation hub in the Greater Golden Horseshoe area.*

Recommendation #3 - *Create a governance framework between the GTAA and HFR Project office to collaboratively advance and manage the project on airport lands, including cooperative planning, design, communications, and delivery.*

Recommendation #4 - *Continue investigation of Southwestern Ontario rail improvements with specific attention to Toronto Pearson for future rail expansion*

Canada's Gateway – Toronto Pearson International Airport

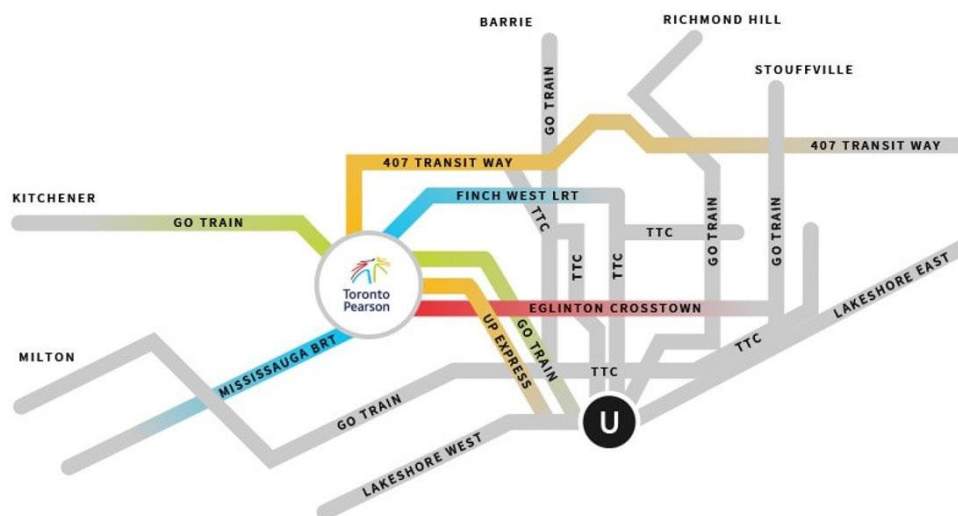
The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) area is one of Canada's fastest growing regions, expected to reach approx. **13.5 million residents** in 2041ⁱ. At the heart of the region is Canada's largest airport, Toronto Pearson, which acts a magnet for **travelers, workers, cargo, and economic investment** to Canada. The area around Toronto Pearson, the Airport Economic Zone (AEZ), is the **second largest employment zone in Canada** after downtown Torontoⁱⁱ.

In 2023 alone, Toronto Pearson moved **44.8 million** passengers, serving as a major gateway to the rest of Canada and the global economy. Offering connections to **175 global destinations**, Toronto Pearson serves as the first point of arrival for **millions of visitors** to Canada, creating considerable demand for high-quality connections to the rest of the province by road and rail upon arrival. With Toronto Pearson passenger demands forecast to increase to **65 million passengers by 2035** and double to **90 million annual passengers by 2044**, investments will need to be made to meet increased demands for transit and inter-modal connectivity.

Toronto Pearson is already a major transportation destination but falls short on full integration – something the GTAA is working to change. In conjunction with our vision for our **Transformative Capital Plan** to build the airport of the future, we are moving towards being a true **airport multi-modal hub**.

We aspire to provide high quality **connections for air passengers** to and from the airport, serve as a **major multi-modal hub** providing key groundside transportation links to locations around the province, and **connect employees and jobs** at the airport and in the surrounding employment zone. Our vision is to build a fully integrated transit hub at Toronto Pearson, linking local and rapid transit to regional and **national rail**, serving as the province's **second major transit hub** after Toronto's Union Station.

Figure: Toronto Pearson multi-modal transportation hub



Toronto Pearson's passenger terminals are **located just 3 kilometres from the high-capacity Kitchener passenger rail corridor**. Starting in 2010 the corridor was widened, new track was installed, and new overpasses/grade separations were built to allow **more frequent, reliable passenger rail service**ⁱⁱⁱ. As part of Metrolinx's GO

Expansion Program, the segment between Toronto Pearson and downtown Toronto will be **upgraded with full electrification^{iv}**, further improving this vital transportation corridor and creating an attractive opportunity to provide direct and high-quality inter-city rail connections to Toronto Pearson.

The Opportunity

As Canada's gateway airport, bringing direct HFR and potentially VIA Rail Corridor services to Toronto Pearson will make it **easier for Canadians to connect coast-to-coast and enable increased tourism and business travel**. For example, a Kingston resident wishing to visit their sister in Calgary could connect **directly** to Toronto Pearson onwards on a flight to their final destination. Or a businessperson in Halifax could fly into Toronto Pearson and reliably and easily continue on to their client meeting in Peterborough. **Toronto Pearson can serve as a magnifier to boost the number of destinations** available to train riders.

In the Greater Golden Horseshoe area, over **4 million residents (or almost 60% of the population excluding the City of Toronto), live west of Toronto^v**, creating a western population centre of gravity. These residents would be well served by an HFR station closer to their doorsteps and a second hub to complement the large population of potential riders. **Toronto Pearson is well-located to be accessible to many of these western GGH residents.**

The GTAA advocates that the Committee recommends the government expand the initial scope of the High Frequency Rail (HFR) Project during the co-development phase to include Toronto Pearson Airport

Inter-city Rail and Major International Airports

Multi-modal hubs are a common component of the world's largest airports, providing travel options for the millions of people who travel to, from and through the airport and its adjacent employment areas. Major international airports have **demonstrated commercial success by linking rail and air modes together** to create a seamless passenger experience.

From Europe to Asia, there are many examples of intercity rail operators connecting passengers to major air hubs, **improving the passenger journey, and improving ease of travel.**

Table: *Examples of Major International Airports with rail transportation connections^{vi}*

Airport	2023 Air Passengers	Airport Express Train	Metro/ Rapid Transit/Local Trains	Direct Inter-City/National Trains
London Heathrow Airport	79.2 M	✓	✓	
Charles De Gaulle Airport	67.4 M		✓	✓
Frankfurt Airport	59.4 M		✓	✓
Amsterdam Schiphol Airport	61.9 M	✓	✓	✓
Shanghai Pudong Airport	-	✓	✓	
Shanghai Hongqiao Airport	-		✓	✓
Hong Kong International Airport	39.3 M	✓	✓	
Toronto Pearson Airport	44 M	✓		
Zurich Airport	28.9 M		✓	✓
Geneva Airport	16.4 M		✓	✓

Frankfurt Airport in Germany is a good case study. Leveraging the direct rail connections between Frankfurt Airport and domestic and international destinations, the German national rail operator, Deutsche Bahn, and Lufthansa **offer integrated bookings** that **allow travel via rail and plane on one ticket.** These types of **multimodal innovations** bring **more customer choice** and are uniquely enabled by linking air/rail infrastructure and offering services that are coordinated, convenient and planned with the users’ journeys in mind.

Images: Frankfurt Airport Railway Station - Exterior & Terminal (left); Interior (right)



Ongoing Collaborative Engagement

Staff-level discussions between the HFR Project team and GTAA staff have been productive so far. The opportunities and potential benefits of bringing HFR to the airport have been presented and discussed, including preliminary feasibility discussions between the parties.

The GTAA has also met with Transport Canada regarding the Southwestern Ontario (SWO) study for improved passenger rail service in this area of the province. The opportunity to connect Southwestern Ontario cities to the airport in the future with direct rail service is supported by the GTAA for further exploration, as a key gateway Canada and the world. **The GTAA is also in discussions with Metrolinx on enhanced regional rail** to the airport as part of the GO Expansion Program and has been engaged as part of the updated **Regional Transportation Plan** currently underway.

The GTAA is embarking on its transit vision to **increase the number of viable mobility options for passengers, employees, and visitors to access Toronto Pearson**. Our objective is to be an active participant in the planning process for groundside transportation and to help co-develop solutions that are best for project, best for airport, and best for Canada.

Conclusion

The GTAA's experience and is well-aligned to the desired project outcomes of the HFR Project, including **shifting passengers to sustainable passenger rail, enhancing the passenger experience, and supporting the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions**. Given the growing population of the GGH, the criticality of Toronto Pearson to the national economy, and the proven international precedents for air-rail integration, a HFR station at the airport is a sensible addition to the HFR project scope.

ⁱ Ontario - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2019 - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe-2019-order-council-6412019>

ⁱⁱ TBOT 2023 - The GTA West Economic Gateway <https://bot.com/About/Councils-Joint-Initiatives/GTA-West-Economic-Gateway#:~:text=The%20area%20surrounding%20Pearson%20International,our%20economy%20and%20global%20competitiveness>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ontario - EA - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/georgetown-south-corridor-service-expansion-and-airport-transportation-link>

^{iv} Metrolinx – GO Expansion Kitchener Line – <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/kitchener-line-go-expansion>

^v Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

^{vi} Based on publicly available data sources (where available)