



The Impact of the Mississauga Bus Rapid Transit System on the GTA West Market

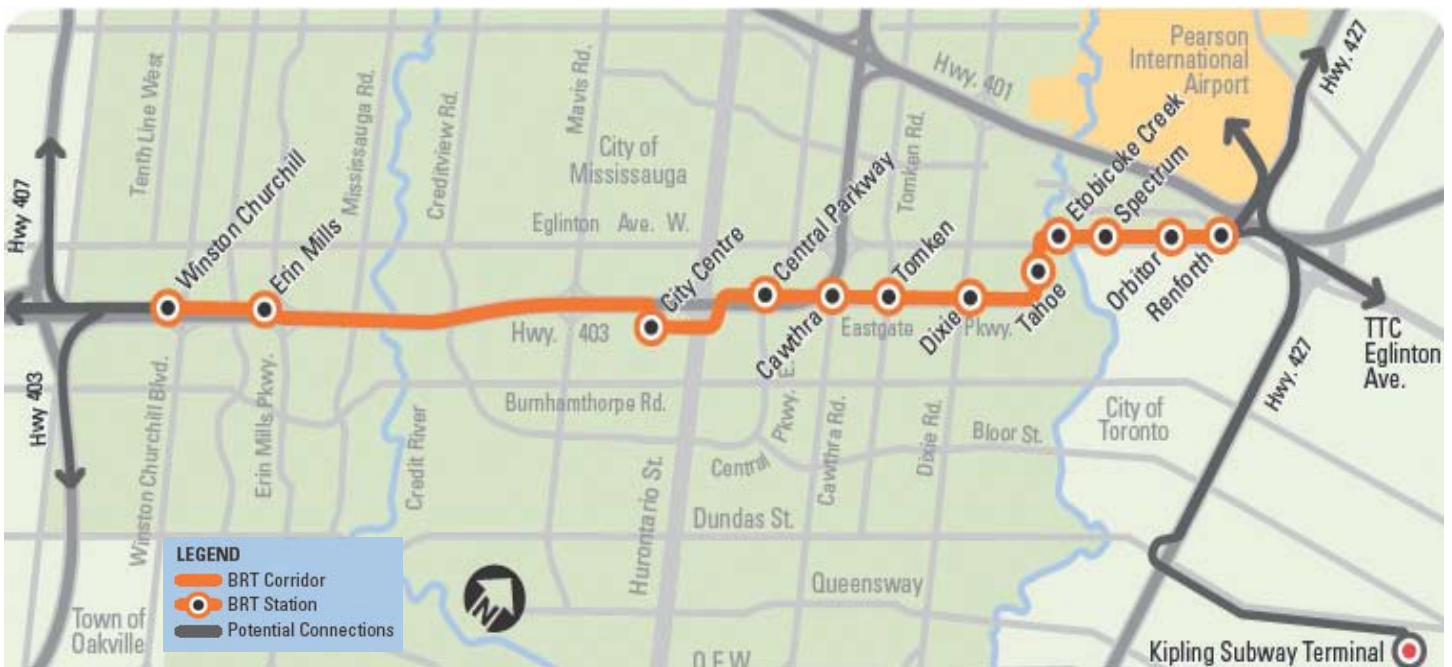


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With the rapid growth of gas prices combined with the need to increase the population density in the GTA it is inevitable that there has to be an improved public transit system connecting the different municipalities of the GTA. The Mississauga Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT) proposed for completion in 2012 is expected to alleviate some of these problems in the GTA west.

The Mississauga BRT system is part of the city's transit ridership growth strategy, which sets out a five-year target of achieving a 25 per cent increase in the use of mass transit in Mississauga. The BRT is also a part of a Greater Toronto Area GO Transit initiative to create a high efficiency east-west busway that will span from Oakville in the west all the way to Pickering in the east. In total the Mississauga section of the BRT is expected to cost approximately \$259 million. Both the Provincial and Federal Governments have already committed \$173 million to the development of the BRT with the rest of the funding being provided by GO Transit and the City of Mississauga.

The Mississauga section of the BRT system will cover approximately 18 kilometers from Winston Churchill Boulevard to Renforth Drive. The new system is to feature both express busses that will only stop at designated stations and busses that stop at each station along the route. In addition, GO buses will also service the BRT route. The busway will allow Mississauga and GO buses to travel along the roadway in dedicated bus lanes without stop signs, signals, or other traffic. This ensures a fast and smooth method of transportation for riders. There are to be 12 proposed stops along the Mississauga section of the BRT, all of which will connect to regular community bus services. Furthermore there are to be five stops that will include park and ride facilities.



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At the current time there are other municipalities considering a system similar to the BRT, however, none have yet to initiate anything. So far, Mississauga has been the only municipality with the foresight to start the planning for such a system years ago, which accounts for the lack of similar services by adjacent municipalities. Once completed the BRT will connect to existing bus services in Oakville to the west. To the east, commuters will transfer from Renforth station to Kipling station via TTC bus in order to continue commuting to downtown Toronto.

In addition to the transit related issues stated above, the BRT is also expected to help make commercial development in the City of Mississauga more desirable. This will be achieved by providing the workforce in the city with fast and reliable public transit. More specifically the section of the BRT to the east of Hurontario is expected to see the most improvement as it contains the majority of the proposed stations – nine out of twelve stations. New and existing developments in the Airport Corporate Centre (ACC) will benefit greatly from the BRT as companies try to attract new workers and make it easier for current employees to get to work without the need of a car. Unfortunately, despite the increased accessibility that the BRT will bring to the ACC, this area will be unable to capitalize on some of the more traditional benefits that a mass transit system allows; such as an increase in the allowable building height, thus increasing the allowable site density.

One area that will be able to take advantage of the increased accessibility is the Mississauga City Centre. With such a large number of both office and residential buildings placed so close together, the Mississauga Transit station at Square One Shopping Centre will act as a major public transit hub. As mentioned above it will provide riders with access to both GO Transit and Mississauga Transit services. This will be a key factor in the future development of the City Centre area, which is congested with automobiles at the present time. Currently the availability rate for all office types in the City Centre is 9.1%, down from 15% in Q1 2007. With the decreasing availability rate and relatively strong office leasing market, this office node could see one or more buildings added to the supply in the very near future.

Currently the BRT is in the preliminary design phase that will continue throughout the summer months until a recommended plan is presented to the community in the fall. During this time input from the community will be considered and the preliminary design concepts will be updated as needed. The final design phase is scheduled to take place between 2008 and 2011. Construction of the BRT is planned to start next year, after the final design phase has begun, and continue until the opening in 2012.



Sources:

www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/brtbasics

www.mississauga.ca/file/com/aprilPICPanels.pdf

For more information, please visit:

www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/brt

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**Avison Young Commercial Real Estate (Ontario) Inc.,
Brokerage**

30 Eglinton Avenue West, Suite 300

Mississauga, ON L5R 3E7

T 905.712.2100

F 905.712.2937

E ayresearch@ay-on.com

W avisonyoung.com



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