

Green Coalition Concerned by Doney Spur Development

by Irwin Rapoport

Times

The Green Coalition has been calling for the Doney Spur to become a major light rail or ultra Light transit (LRT or ULT) link for Island of Montreal for the past 20 years, but a commercial development on the site may eliminate that possibility.

"We have also asked provincial and municipal authorities to conserve rail lines such as the West Island's Doney Spur and treat them just like highway corridors," said Avrom Shtern, the Green Coalition's spokesperson for transportation issues. "However, if the right-of-way is devoured by piecemeal development like the new Home Depot store at the Terrarium Shopping Centre, there will not be any

form of mass transit on the Doney in the future."

"The environment is front and centre in the minds of the public," he added. "Why then does this development only cater to the car and blocks the viability of an environmentally friendly alternative form of public transit? We wonder if there is any way to change Home Depots plans and not block this vital corridor, which should extend all the way to the Lakeshore General Hospital."

On May 31 Green Coalition representatives sounded the alarm about the development at the Agglomeration Council meeting. Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay said that the council would investigate the issue.

Shtern says that Pointe Claire Mayor Bill McMurchie should have

used his authority to guarantee the viability of the corridor for light rail transit operating at surface metro frequencies.

"McMurchie did not do this, even though West Island mayors reached a consensus last year on transit strategies for West Island," said Shtern, "including the identification of Doney Spur's potential as a public transportation corridor."

"This spur was not a made priority, but it should have," he added. "The Green Coalition considers it to be the third rail of the West Island. We applaud the mayors for wanting to improve the frequency and capacity of the Two Mountains line and to integrate the air-rail shuttle idea with an improved Dorion-Rigaud commuter line."

"The strenuous growth of residential development in West Island, coupled with the greatest population explosion in all of Canada that is ongoing in the communities off the western tip of Montreal Island," he notes, "clearly dictates that the Doney Spur will be needed as a mass transit alternative to the overburdened Trans Canada Highway corridor."

Last April, Home Depot's Roger Plamondon assured the local media that the big box chain would not encroach on the Doney Spur.

Until now, the Doney Spur has stretched unimpeded westward from the Two Mountains commuter rail line in St. Laurent, then alongside the congested Trans Canada Highway as

far as western Pointe-Claire to Stillview Avenue, near the Lakeshore General Hospital. Since 1989, the Green Coalition has advocated that the Doney Spur become a major LRT or ULT link for the Island and the keystone piece for integrated mass transit to and from West Island.

The Doney Spur should become West-Island's surface Metro linked to the downtown Metro system at the planned station at Bois-Franc," said Shtern. "Such a line could encourage economic growth and transit-oriented development.†Urban planners envisage a satellite "West Island downtown" to be centered at St. John's Boulevard and the Trans Canada.