



## **Green Coalition Brief**

**Re: The Master Plan of the City of Montreal, presented to the  
Office de consultation publique de Montréal, in June 2004**

**This brief is to be considered as**

### **Addendum 2.**

**to the brief presented in June 2003 entitled:**

**CITY OF MONTREAL - URBAN PLANNING – JUNE 2003  
GREEN COALITION RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Green Coalition is a non-profit association of grass-roots volunteers. Its member-groups and individual members are dedicated to the conservation, protection and restoration of the environment. Members are actively involved in many issues such as, saving the Island's last green spaces, preventing road building through established Nature-Parks and other green spaces, boosting public transit strategies; promoting alternatives to pesticides, pressing for the clean up waste-water runoff and polluted creeks, and for responsible waste reduction and management. In short, the Green Coalition is working vigorously in Montreal, helping to shape a sustainable development city. The stated "general objective of the new Master Plan is to ensure that Montréal's planning initiatives will be based on sustainable development." (Mayor Gérald Tremblay's letter to Montrealers) The Green Coalition is pleased to participate, offering opinion, observations and recommendations as the urban plan evolves.

This brief is presented by Mr. David Fletcher and Mrs. Sylvia Oljemark. Both are porte-parole of the Green Coalition. Mr. Fletcher is Vice-President; Mrs. Oljemark is a member of the Board of Directors and served as the first President of the Green Coalition.

### **Scope of this brief**

In June 2003, one year ago, the Green Coalition presented a brief on Urban Planning for Montreal, giving a number of recommendations on two essential components of sustainable development planning – Natural Green Spaces and Transport. In April 2004, the Green Coalition presented a brief on the draft Policy for the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Spaces. Now, this new brief on the Master Plan will review the recommendations made in the two earlier documents, the city's responses and the resulting changes the city has made in planning orientations over the past year. This brief will also stress specific points where rethinking is needed and outline further improvements that are proposed by the Green Coalition. In addition, recommendations and observations on a variety of other subjects are also offered.

## **PART 1 NATURAL GREEN SPACES**

### **CONTEXT**

#### **Progress on the dossier since June 2003**

In its June 2003 brief, the Green Coalition urged the City of Montreal not to repeat the error of the Montreal Urban Community. The MUC's first Master Plan, 1987, had no Green Space Plan. Exceptional grass-roots efforts were pivotal in putting in place the MUC's \$200 million Green Space Program in 1989. Now, in response to citizens' appeals at news conferences, at city hall question periods, and during special events, the City of Montreal is poised to adopt its Policy for the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Spaces. In November 2003, the Green Coalition mobilized citizens to city hall, calling for green space dollars in the budget, reminding the administration that if the last

natural ecosystems are lost, Montreal can never qualify on the world stage as a Sustainable Development City. Thirty-six million dollars over three years was set aside in the December Budget for green space acquisition.

### **Last chance to save the natural spaces! Even more urgent now - in 2004**

It is twelve long years since the MUC program collapsed – one-half its budget, \$100 million, was left unspent. One thousand hectares of natural lands have been lost to development since the late 1980s. With the boom in the housing market, the losses continue. Montreal's last remaining natural green spaces (1600 hectares) are owned by developers and are zoned for development. Development pressures are so severe that these unprotected green spaces are at risk of disappearing completely in the near future.

At the hearings on the city's new Policy for the Protection of Natural Spaces in April, the grass-roots applauded this courageous step being taken by the city when fiscal constraints are so severe. Citizens cheered the ambitious scope of the plan: above all, they hailed the Policy as the last chance to save Montreal's natural spaces. But, participants at the hearings also expressed fears that the limited funds for green space acquisition (\$36 million) are inadequate and that encroachment through building will despoil much of the remaining green spaces. Mayor Tremblay has stated publicly that investments of between \$100 and \$200 million are needed.

### **Natural Spaces Policy in the new Master Plan: Objectives excellent**

The objectives outlined in the new Natural Spaces Policy are encompassed in the Master Plan. These objectives are excellent. The city has pledged to boost protected natural areas from 3.3% to 8% of Montreal's territory. Achieving the 8% target would satisfy both Quebec and International norms and serve to validate the City of Montreal's sustainable development aspirations. Ten "Écoterritoires" across the city, offering a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, are delineated for protection. These ten eco-zones correspond in every respect with sites recommended in the Green Coalition's June 2003 brief - all respects except one – the Green Coalition still insists that Meadowbrook be included as an eleventh écoterritoire for protection in the policy.

### **Master Plan fails to secure Natural Spaces**

The new Master Plan fails to embody or entrench any legal and binding mechanisms, such as easements, servitudes, bylaws and zoning to protect any of the écoterritoires. Even core-zone properties within the écoterritoires deemed to be of outstanding ecological value and sensitivity continue to be zoned for residential or other development in the Master Plan. eg. Angell Woods and the southern unprotected third of Anse-à-l'Orme Forest (also known as Woods #3), both of inestimable ecological value and both located in the écoterritoire called "le corridor écoforestier de la Rivière-à-l'Orme" are to be prey for developers' bulldozers according to the Master Plan. (Land Use Designation map 3.1.1) Mr. Stephen Lloyd of APAW, Association for the Protection of Angell Woods, a member-group of the Coalition, wrote in his natural spaces brief: « .... des normes élaborées par la Politique relativement à la conservation des espaces naturels seront incluses dans le plan d'urbanisme à titre « d'objectifs » seulement. La Politique manque donc de mordant. »

## **OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Add specifics, precision to Natural Spaces Policy**

Montrealers, justifiably, expect that their cherished natural spaces will be protected in perpetuity and that they will enjoy free access to them. The Policy and the Master Plan both fail to spell out how Montrealers' expectations can be met; both fail to identify any specific sites for conservation. Clarity is needed in the Policy on these essentials. Also, to provide coherence, to focus energies and stimulate participation in the process, this policy must have a Timetable, provide a Progress Report and set reasoned Priorities.

### **Keep rampant development out of écoterritoires**

The limited funds for the purchase of Montreal's last green spaces has fueled fears that this new policy will be weighted in favour of the interests of real estate development and real estate developers. Commonly, municipal administrations regard "vacant" land as a resource to be exploited for urban development, for increased tax revenues. Expanded populations then require more services, more infrastructure, in turn engendering more development for yet more revenue – an inexorable development spiral! Close to 90% of Montreal's territory has already been built over. The Green Coalition urges that, for truly sustainable practice, this building spiral be stopped outside the last natural ecosystems and that these lands of rich irreplaceable biodiversity be spared any more incursions.

### **Set up "Natural Environment Protection and Enhancement Fund" now**

The Draft Natural Spaces Policy vaguely mentions the possibility of setting up a "Natural Environment Protection and Enhancement Fund". The City is urged to exercise a leadership role now to create the fund, and to put its considerable machinery to work to secure more funds from private, corporate and public sources - funds for green space acquisition. Further, every mechanism to leverage and double up funds must be exploited to the maximum. Citizens are participating. APAW, the Association for the Protection of Angell Woods and the Nature Conservancy of Canada have teamed up to create a fund to purchase Angell Woods.

### **Green Coalition seeks help for green spaces from superior governments: municipal politicians and others are invited to do the same**

In 1991, the MUC Green Space Program collapsed – a Moratorium halted all green space spending until now. That Program was scrapped because of the shameful lack of financial support from the superior governments – at the same time that downloading was draining city coffers! Note that the Federal Government has made no contribution to green space spending in Montreal – ever. Between 1979 and 1992, the MUC invested close to \$200 million in the acquisition and management of its Nature-Parks. The total sum contributed by the Quebec Government since 1979 is \$12.5 million - in two installments back in 1979 and 1981.

## **Seek help of superior governments, cont'd**

### **Pay only once to acquire Natural Spaces!**

The Green Coalition is seeking one-time contributions of dedicated funds of at least \$36 million each from the Federal Government and from the Quebec Government to match or exceed the contribution of the City of Montreal to be used for green space acquisition according to the City's new Natural Spaces Policy. Note that unlike many needs that are constant demands on the public purse, a single investment can help Montreal prevent the terminal loss of its natural ecosystems. The Coalition insists that financial provisions for saving Montreal's green spaces are firmly placed high on the priority list as the "New Deal" between Ottawa, Quebec and our city, Montreal, evolves!

### **Greenfields for Brownfields: Swapping to save Natural Spaces: A Green Coalition Landbanking Proposal**

A landbank of surplus Federal and Provincial properties can be created to be exchanged for the natural spaces owned by developers, thus conserving the ecologically valuable sites. Many surplus properties are contaminated lands, or brownfields that, once rehabilitated through "The National Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy" or Quebec's Revi-sols Program, offer exceptional opportunities for redevelopment. Surplus lands, contaminated or not, serve this objective equally well.

**Green servitudes:** The Green Coalition also seeks that servitudes, once set aside for road building and no longer needed, be turned into green servitudes in perpetuity as natural corridors for flora and fauna and to augment Nature-Parks.

### **Nature-Park statutes need boosting**

Currently, portions of Nature-Parks, if not whole parks, can be leased, sold or rezoned. Only one (1) of the nine (9) nature-parks, Parc-nature du Bois-de-Saraguay has a special level of protection under the aegis of the Ministère des affaires culturelles as an Arrondissement naturel. All the Nature-Parks and the natural areas that will be protected by the new Policy must have at least equivalent statutes to the Bois-de-Saraguay, where no trees may be cut.

### **Guarantees, Guarantors for Natural Spaces Policy**

The Green Coalition seeks guarantees that the Natural Spaces Policy would survive a municipal administration change and that the superior levels of government stand as guarantors so that the program would continue. The Coalition urges the City to help secure such guarantees from the superior governments and to formally entrench these guarantees in the Policy for the Protection of Natural Spaces.

## **OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS – RELATED TOPICS**

### **The "Permanent Agricultural Zone"**

**Ms Alison Hackney**, a Green Coalition member who owns a farm in Senneville, offers the following observations about the "Permanent Agricultural Zone":

“It is encouraging to read of the City of Montreal’s stated intention to maintain the “Permanent Agricultural Zone”, however, it is worrisome that in the very next line of section 11.4 of the Plan, it is recognized that land *could be excluded* from the farm zone. It is difficult not to be cynical, as Québec’s Law to Protect Agricultural Land was supposed to maintain the “Permanent Agricultural Zone”, and farmland has decreased yearly since the adoption of the Law. How will the City do better? The City planners should integrate agricultural activities with the plans for natural green space and public transit and bicycle routes. These are very compatible, as the farms that are presently part of the urban landscape are very attractive and harmonious and attract retail customers on-site. The Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels recognizes the importance of buffer zones to protect critical natural sites. Farms could fill this role at the same time as generating economic activity.”

(Historical note:) In 1991, at the request of the MUC, the Quebec government dezoned 700 hectares of Montreal’s “Permanent” Agricultural Zone – some of the best prime farmland in Quebec. This action reversed a long-standing commitment by the MUC to protect the urban farm zone.

### **Human Scale Communities vs Sterile Subdivisions**

In an article entitled, *Sedentary lifestyles are a matter of design – urban design*, printed in The Gazette in May, 2004, **Mr. Avi Friedman**, who teaches architecture at McGill University wrote:

“Building communities rather than subdivisions means that we introduce features that foster social bonding to them. Pathways, play areas, benches and stores don’t simply make environmental sense, they hold social wisdom too. ...common-sense planning can work on a city scale. It is one plan Montreal’s new neighbourhoods should adopt.”

### **Pierrefonds/Senneville to create a human scale quartier**

“With 60,000 to 75,000 new housing units proposed for the city, 6,000 in Pierrefonds West alone, it is important that these new developments be planned on a human scale to create local communities with all the necessary amenities easily accessible on foot and by bicycle. It is a hopeful signal that the new Pierrefonds/Senneville urban plan proposes a mixed development project reflecting the principles of ‘new urbanism’ that is intended to foster the development of a viable community on the scale of a ‘quartier’.” notes Mr. Gareth Richardson of Pierrefonds Environment Committee, a Coalition member-group.

## **Re-Greening Initiatives/ Indigenous species**

Re-greening initiatives, whether undertaken under the purview of the new Natural Spaces Policy or the Politique de l'arbre (that is still in the formative stage) will need planning timetables and targets. Note that the MUC's 'Biomass-Map' report, in 1989, urgently called for the vegetation cover of the Island to be augmented by 25% through re-greening. But, with the limited financial resources, investments in re-greening must wait until the natural parklands are first secured. For re-greening purposes, a policy of planting only indigenous, non-invasive species should be undertaken. Such species are hardy and best adapted to this climate, thus ensuring the success of investments in planting projects.

## **Setbacks can help save Green Spaces**

**Mr. Avrom Shtern**, of Les Amis de Meadowbrook, a Green Coalition member-group contributes the following information:

“Cities have encroached up to the limits of industrial installations and railway yards, which have had pre-existing rights, without regard for the need of safe distance setbacks. A balance must be struck between the conflicting needs of viable economic activities and healthy residential communities.

Class 3 industries such as railway yards and the recently cancelled Asphalt/Soil Decontamination plants in Lachine must have setbacks of at least 300 meters from future residential developments to avoid/ mitigate technological risk and conflicting land uses.

Such setbacks apply in Ontario under the aegis of the Ministry of the Environment. Technological risks to sensitive lands and ecologically important green spaces are recognized in the *Ontario Municipal Guidelines on Compatibility Between Industrial Facilities and Sensitive Land Uses*. The guideline is “intended to be applied in the land use planning process to prevent or minimize future land use problems due to the encroachment of sensitive land uses and industrial land uses on one another.”

Meadowbrook Golf Course located in Côte-St-Luc-Hampstead, Montreal West and Lachine Boroughs could not be built on or developed if such guidelines were applicable here in Quebec.

The City of Montreal is urged to adopt its own setback standards – equivalent to those in force in Ontario – for future industrial and residential development, railway rights-of-way, as well as for green spaces and shorelines – as permitted under Quebec Law.” (L.R.Q., chapitre S-2-3, Loi sur la sécurité civile, ch.1 article 7)

## **Aging religious orders giving up land holdings – new green spaces?**

With shrinking communities, religious orders (like the Grey Nuns) are giving up their huge properties, long-held tax-free. These properties, many on the waterfront, contribute significantly to the city's biomass, helping offset the effects of urban pollution on air and water. To retain these benefits, these lands should be brought into the public domain. Then as green spaces, publicly accessible, these sites can serve the greater community.



## **PART 2 TRANSPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Foreword to the Green Coalition's June 2003 Urban Planning Brief, this appeal was written:

“The Green Coalition respectfully urges the city administration move quickly to adopt its long-promised Natural Spaces Policy and to establish an Integrated Mass Transit Plan now, so that these essential components may become integral to the 2004 Urban Plan as it evolves.”

The Natural Spaces Policy is soon to be adopted, but the Transportation Plan for Montreal is to be adopted only in 2005, albeit crafted in respect of the orientations set out in the Master Plan. An important planning tool, the CIMA II Report with its recommendations for West Island Transport is not yet available.

Nevertheless, orientations, objectives and stances being evolved by the city administration on transportation decision-making are set out in the Draft Version of the Master Plan. Meetings during the year with city officials and Green Coalition representatives provided exchanges of information. In addition, more information on transport plans that are in the works was provided in the course of public consultation sessions on the Master Plan. Specifically, such information was imparted by messieurs Pierre Sainte-Marie and Alain Trudeau at the Dollard-des-Ormeaux session on May 25. Information gleaned from these varied sources is not consistent in all respects! Discussion of these confusing points follows later in this paper.

### **CONTEXT**

#### **Virage Vert for Montreal Transportation**

The Green Coalition applauds the transportation objectives expressed in the Draft Master Plan. (Chapter 2.2) Emphasis is to be placed on public transit as Montreal's transportation mode for the future! And, “The City believes that it would be appropriate for the Québec government to rethink its priorities and to use grants from the federal government's Canadian Strategic Infrastructure Fund for public transportation instead of road building.” Green Coalition concurs!

Bicycling and walking are to be regarded as modes of transportation – refreshing! With urban planning approaches for healthier communities, coupled with the excellent plans to complete the City-wide Bicycle Network - the Island's perimeter circuit – and North/South links, these are certain steps towards sustainable development practice. Clearly, bicycles will require a special niche on all trains and metros - at all times!

## **Virage Vert : In 2002, Nature-Parks were threatened by new roads**

In May 2002, proposals in the CIMA I Report for building a “spaghetti network” of new roads and autoroutes through most of the West Island’s Nature-Parks and other unprotected green spaces became known. Green space defenders were galvanized into action: on May 2, 2002, the Green Coalition wrote:

“Mayor Tremblay, please remember that countless numbers of your citizens have struggled for years for the creation of these Nature-Parks. New roads spawn more cars and pollution. – Is your city’s recent call for Kyoto ratification just lip service? Our transit surveys show 87% of rush-hour vehicles on Trans-Canada carry one person – the driver. There is no need for new roads to encourage such practices. But there is great need for coherent strategies to reduce vehicular traffic – car-pooling, dedicated lanes for filled vehicles, stiff fees for reduced downtown parking, express-bus convoys, off-island beltways to eliminate through trucking (proposed 440 is not a beltway) and light rail systems like Green Coalition’s Doney Spur Proposal for a new Central West-Island/ Downtown service.”

(Recommendations for Integrated Public Transit in the Coalition’s June 2003 Brief expanded on the strategies mentioned in this letter to the Mayor.)

The Visit to Bois-Franc Forest in Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park in October 2002 was a high point in efforts to save the green spaces from rampant road building. The Mayor, his entourage, Federal and Quebec politicians and citizens walked the forest path where six-lane de Salaberry was to be built. They also visited the Doney Spur to consider the old spur’s potential as a new light rail axis for integrated mass transit.

## **Virage Vert: City officials say natural spaces are now safe from new road building**

Through the past year, in public question periods, in meetings with City officials, Green Coalition representatives have been reassured that natural spaces come before roads. De Salaberry Boulevard extension through Bois-Franc in Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park would be excluded from the new Master Plan; plans to construct the 440 Autoroute to Laval through Île Bizard, its Nature-Park and through Point Théorêt (part of Cap Saint-Jacques located on Île Bizard) were not favoured at all. Plans for road building through Angell Woods were to be cancelled. Most particularly, assurances were repeated and definitive that there would be no new roads constructed through the Anse-à-l’Orme Nature-Park or any part of its Forest (Woods #3). That is, specifically, plans to extend Pierrefonds Boulevard to Morgan Boulevard through the newly-named Corridor écoforestier de la Rivière-à-l’Orme would be abandoned. Bravo!

In addition, assurances were made that, as public transportation planning evolves, serious attention will be given to the **Green Coalition's Doney Spur Proposal** for a light rail system, a Surface Metro for Central West Island.

Laudably, the City is resolved that Notre-Dame Street East be an urban boulevard not an Expressway. It is encouraging also that the City is leaning towards favouring an urban boulevard for the Louis-H.-La Fontaine Boulevard corridor and a modest bridge to Laval, instead of the more invasive version - Autoroute 25 to Laval. The latter would potentially compromise the sensitive Islands Rochon, Boutin, Lapierre and Gagné and the Ruisseau de Montigny Basin. Autoroute 25, like its mirror image in West Island, the 440 Autoroute to Laval, would serve to exacerbate on-Island traffic congestion and promote off-Island urban sprawl. Neither Autoroute is a true beltway. The Green Coalition urges the City to hold to its rejection of the 440: its construction would be an ecological disaster in idyllic Île-Bizard.

## **Glitches in the Virage Vert! New plans shock Green Coalition**

### **Officials are contradicted:**

The repeated and definitive assurances made to Green Coalition reps by City officials that no new road would go through the Anse-à-l'Orme Écoterritoire were contradicted by Mr. Sainte-Marie on May 25. Mr. Sainte-Marie affirmed that Pierrefonds Boulevard will be extended west through the écoterritoire, then south to join Morgan Boulevard; and that the only question remaining is to determine the exact trajectory of the road. Sadly, the Draft Master Plan appears to support Mr. Sainte-Marie's statements in Chapter 2, action 3.3.

### **Boroughs' planning schemes show new road through écoterritoire:**

The planning maps for the boroughs of both Pierrefonds/Senneville and Beaconsfield/Baie d'Urfé have partial indications on their maps labelled "*Projected extension of Pierrefonds Boulevard to Morgan Boulevard*".

### **Doney Spur confusion:**

During all the discussions about the Doney Spur with City and other officials (and they have been numerous because the Green Coalition first made the Doney Spur Proposal in 1989) **no use other than rail service has ever been mentioned for the Doney Spur!** At the hearings May 25, Green Coalition members were astounded to hear Mr. Sainte-Marie's remarks describing plans to roll buses on the old Doney Spur! In section 2.2 on transport in the Draft Master Plan, a short reference is made of proposed initiatives including reserved lanes for buses and taxis on the Doney Spur.

The Green Coalition has serious concerns about these new developments as described below.

## **GREEN COALITION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Extension of Pierrefonds Boulevard through L'Anse-à-l'Orme Écoterritoire to join Morgan Boulevard in Baie d'Urfé is unacceptable**

#### **Ecological Impact of Road**

- Extending this artery while preserving the ecological integrity of L'Anse-à-l'Orme Écoterritoire is wishful thinking: it is an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. And once the sensitive zone is breached, more development alongside the road will surely follow.
- The hydrology of sensitive forested areas adjacent to the floodplain will be disrupted, in particular the Anse-à-l'Orme Forest (also known as the MUC's Woods #3), east of Chemin L'Anse à l'Orme. This forest is ranked as among the most ecologically valuable on the Island. Its relatively small size is a constraint as far as its long-term viability is concerned and it can little afford further insult if adjoining areas are fragmented. Biodiversity stands to be lost - and visitors impoverished.
- The viability of a beaver marsh that provides habitat for migratory water fowl will be rendered impossible. The marsh lies to the west of the point where Chemin L'Anse-à-l'Orme crosses the Rivière-à-l'Orme and in the path of the only possible route for the road extension. Strains on the water quality of the Rivière-à-l'Orme itself would increase; sufficient water supplies to the river could decrease.
- Traffic will disrupt the tranquil conditions for wildlife in the corridor as well as for people looking for a rare and peaceful retreat from the noise, smell and bustle of urban life. One road, Chemin L'Anse-à-l'Orme, is enough of an intrusion - it destroys the serenity of this prize locale and causes enormous stress to both wildlife and people.
- This écoterritoire is a unique zone that needs all the help it can get in the planning process. Community participation must focus on achieving the protection of this rich ecosystem; energies must not be siphoned off to fighting the new road building plan.

#### **Futility of Extension**

The road is to extend west then south from western Pierrefonds where new housing development is planned to provide enhanced access to a station on the Rigaud commuter rail line in Baie d'Urfé. During morning rush hour, most of these commuters want to go east towards the city centre. This extension will move commuters westwards in their cars to access the rail service that will then take them eastward; the entire wasteful process being reversed in the evening rush hour. Note that the Rigaud rail service is efficient only during the rush hours during the week. Off-hours and weekends are ill-served. Ecologically valuable lands and their public use and enjoyment could be sacrificed to a less than optimal public transit service. Priority is given to getting people to work, inefficiently, through a disrupted natural space rather than enhancing opportunities for their leisure in the same space. What a cheerless vision we have here!

## **Alternatives to destructive extension of Pierrefonds Boulevard**

- The same commuter traffic that would use the Pierrefonds Boulevard extension could, as easily, be channeled towards the Trans Canada Highway (A40) along the planned boulevard in the servitude reserved for the A 440. The future residents of western Pierrefonds would then be able to reach the train station in Baie D'Urfé by travelling west on the Trans Canada (or Chemin Ste Marie) and accessing the interchange constructed to provide a link between Rte 20 and Trans Canada Highway (A40). Residents of any new development in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue would have easy access to the new Morgan Boulevard/Trans Canada interchange without the Pierrefonds Boulevard extension.
- The boulevard in the A440 servitude would also provide a direct route east by car or by bus on the Trans Canada Highway proper or by way of Chemin Ste Marie. At present, Chemin Ste Marie crosses the Trans Canada Highway at the approximate point where the interchange for the boulevard in the 440 servitude would be placed (near the Coliseum Theatre Complex). Shuttle buses could deliver riders from the new development in western Pierrefonds along Chemin Ste Marie to the south side of Trans Canada Highway to the terminal end of the Doney Spur at Stillview Avenue.

## **GREEN COALITION'S DONEY SPUR PROPOSAL (since 1989)**

### **Doney Spur Light Rail Line should be developed as the backbone of public transit in the West Island: Schedules and fares should be integrated with the Metro.**

- Doney Spur Light Rail Line (first proposed by the Coalition in 1989) is the keystone piece of the Green Coalition's integrated mass transit strategies. The old Spur has the potential to be the new Surface Metro for central West Island, operating with schedules and fares comparable to existing Metro lines, conveying passengers to and from Montreal's downtown core.
- Doney Spur runs west to east through the heart of the West Island. The Spur is a virtually disused freight rail line that starts at Stillview Avenue\* in Pointe-Claire and goes eastward along the south side of one of Montreal's most congested and problematic arteries, the Trans Canada Highway. Then the Spur curves north past Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park to join the Two Mountains line near Highway 13. Doney Spur service can be linked at Bois-Franc Station to the entire Metro system, once the planned extension of the Orange Line from Côte Vertu to Bois-Franc is complete.  
\*The Doney Spur right-of-way can possibly be reclaimed as far west as St. Charles Boulevard.

- Doney Spur Light Rail Line can be an important axis for public transit, offering an attractive alternative to daily commuters, alleviating traffic on the Trans Canada Highway and precluding road network building in the same region. The Doney Spur service can have a dramatic effect on the future development of a West Island “downtown”, its commercial core, centred on St Jean Blvd and the Trans Canada Highway. Serving the growing West Island suburbs, stations along the Spur can provide access to Lakeshore General Hospital, the Fairview Hub, Saint-Laurent’s Techno and Industrial Parks, Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park, etc.

**Surprise Proposal to roll buses on Doney Spur! No cost/benefit studies, no environmental impact studies are quoted in the Draft Master Plan to warrant this sudden change in vocation for Doney Spur.**

**The proposal in the Master Plan for bus service on the Doney Spur Line, with a possible upgrade to rail service in the indefinite future, is a recipe for failure. For the reasons stated below, buses will not draw the sort of passenger volume that will justify an upgrade.**

- Bus service will not capture the commuting public’s imagination; buses will not attract riders in significant volume; a train service will. The full trains on the Rigaud and Two Mountains demonstrate this. The riders that could equivalently fill the Doney Spur Light Rail Service now wait in the Trans Canada Highway congestion in their cars. Also, for the most part, buses only appeal to students, the elderly and those who don’t own cars.
- Commuters are far more likely to gravitate to a high capacity light rail train than to a bus because: 1. they are more likely to find a place in the train than on a bus 2. they are far less likely to have to wait for the next train than for the next bus. This reliability factor is an important draw for ridership.
- As a light rail line, Doney Spur could deliver large volumes of people on a tight schedule into the downtown public transit system in less time and with less stress and pollution than the present private vehicle alternative.
- Doney Spur is the only transit solution in the West Island that can satisfy Montreal’s declared sustainable development objectives.
- **Two new overpasses** on the Trans Canada Highway, one at Delmar/Tecumseh between Sources and St Jean Boulevards, the other at Stillview between St Jean and St Charles Boulevards, could relieve bottlenecking on the three existing overpasses while providing ready access to the Doney Spur line from north of the Trans Canada Highway. The two new overpasses could favor bus shuttles during rush hour. The shuttle buses could bring passengers to the Doney Spur line from park and ride facilities in peripheral localities.

- **The Doney Spur right-of-way must be preserved intact for light rail public transit use – if not in the short term, then certainly for such use in the future. In the interim, the Spur can serve as a linear/nature corridor, for walking/cycling.**

## **MORE TRANSPORT-RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Railbanking:**

The City of Montreal, in conjunction with the AMT (Agence métropolitaine de transport), should be acquiring or otherwise securing the abandoned, or underused railway lines on its territory for light rail transit (or even modern trolleys where appropriate) in the longer term and for linear/nature corridors, for walking/cycling in the shorter term. Examples of such rights-of-way are: the Montreal/Lachine Subdivision (Victoria/Boucharde), the Lasalle Loop, the North/South Lachine Canal Bank Branches, the Park Avenue Subdivision and of course the Doney Spur. Serious attention must be given to enacting a moratorium to prevent any building in such rail transit corridors.

### **TOD – Transit Oriented Development and ‘Intensification’**

The Green Coalition is completely in accord with TOD or Transit Oriented Development - the principle of intensifying residential and commercial development, as well as community services, close to metro and rail public transit nodes. This can promote sustainable development practice, reducing the eating up of natural and other land in uncontrolled urban sprawl. Creating new, denser communities close to transit hubs can reduce the dependency on the automobile

**TODs inappropriate in écoterritoires:** Creating intensification poles within the last rare, remaining natural ecosystems in the City – within the écoterritoires is inappropriate. Two areas deemed for Intensification, shown on map 2.2.2 of the Master Plan are located in particularly sensitive natural environments within the Écoforestier corridor of Rivière-à-l’Orme near Beaurepaire Station and within the Rapides du Cheval-Blanc Écoterritoire near the proposed new train station at Cheval Blanc. These areas must be spared the impacts of high density development.

Particularly distressing is the immense development with its Miami Beach profile slated for Cheval-Blanc West. Five 10-storey towers and fifteen other substantial structures are to loom over the shoreline green space. The mega-project appears to compromise guidelines in the Master Plan for boosting Montréal Bleu! Chapter 2, objective 11 – enhance the island character of the City’s identity; action 11.2 – Control the site coverage and height of buildings along the waterside....Maintaining visual access to the water ....

### **Rethink new train station at Cheval Blanc: Divert investment to Doney Spur Line**

Planners and decision-makers should rethink plans for a new station at Cheval-Blanc on the Two Mountains Line - its capacity is already exhausted – and the line goes off-Island

just past Cheval Blanc, providing little service to most of West Island – even if the line is double-tracked. The new station will pull desperate train-commuters looking for a seat on the train to the environs. With the population explosion of the mega-high-rise project in this zone “enclavé”, major traffic headaches are on the way. Instead, investments should be diverted to the Doney Spur Light Rail Line to serve a broad spectrum of West Islanders, while offering opportunities for “intensification” and for economic exploitation along the Line – a gold mine!

### **Vacant land ideal for enhanced transit hub at St Jean Boulevard on Doney Spur**

The large tract of vacant land on the south/east corner of Trans Canada Highway and St Jean Boulevard, diagonally across from Fairview Centre, should be secured now by the City. This site will be invaluable as a major transit hub on the Doney Spur Light Rail Line.

### **De Salaberry servitude should be deleted**

When the Montreal Urban Community purchased the southern part of the Bois-Franc Forest for \$14.9 million in April of 1990, it was a magnificent addition to the Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park! But the deed of sale included a servitude, (33.5 meters wide) through the middle of the forest for the construction of six-lane de Salaberry. This legal servitude reinforced the provision for the construction of the road that had been included in the Schéma d'aménagement in 1987. Green Coalition members are celebrating the news that the de Salaberry extension is finally going to be removed from the Master Plan, the new Schéma!

But, there are still serious concerns - if the legal servitude is retained it would be far too easy for any future administration to bring back the plan and build the road. The Green Coalition urges the City to take the necessary legal steps to remove the de Salaberry servitude from the title deeds to the Bois-de-Liesse Nature-Park.

## **CONCLUSION**

**The City of Montreal's Master Plan is the blueprint for the future of our beautiful Island Metropolis. The Green Coalition is proud to make some contribution to shaping the city's sustainable development. We extend our thanks to all who have made our participation possible.**

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