

1.0 Introduction: A Question of Destiny

Access + mobility = destiny.

Southwestern Ontario's destiny is being jeopardized today by inadequate public transportation access and mobility. It's a lesson many regions around the world – all of them potential competitors of Southwestern Ontario – have learned as they have positioned themselves for sustainable growth tied to a need for integrated, car-free transportation solutions.

Southwestern Ontario's public modes – rail, intercity bus, intercommunity highway transportation and urban transit – are inadequate for its current needs and it shows. This gap is limiting Southwestern Ontario's economic and social vitality, and its long-term prospects. As both aging Baby Boomers and a new generation of Canadians – the Millennials – eschew car ownership, their travel choices will increasingly factor into this situation. As with several other regions around North America that compete with Southwestern Ontario, its transportation system needs to change – and it needs to be undertaken quickly. "Business as usual" is not acceptable.

Southwestern Ontario once enjoyed a wide variety of public transportation options that served as effective alternatives to the automobile. But as car ownership and driving increased, the public modes saw their market share decline. This started a vicious cycle of cuts to stem rising costs and declining revenues, which only made rail and bus less attractive than driving, leading to further losses. Today, the car is the undeniable king of travel in Southwestern Ontario.

This automotive over-dependence is one of the issues that must be faced as Southwestern Ontario makes its transition. The economic, social and environmental evidence against using the car as a one-size-fits-all mobility solution is well documented.

In its 2016 tool kit, *New Directions*, Oxford County outlined the elements and principles to deliver high quality public transportation that is multi-modal and seamless. Now, a plan for delivering that type of cohesive and comprehensive travel is detailed here in *SouthwestLynx: Integrated High-Performance Passenger Transportation for Southwestern Ontario*.

While this region's destiny will not be determined solely by resolving its transportation challenges, reams of real-world evidence have proved, non-automotive access and mobility are major factors in the success of regional economies around the world.

SouthwestLynx is a practical, incremental and affordable approach to providing that mobility and access. It is a framework based on concepts that have succeeded elsewhere in North America, under conditions similar to those faced by Southwestern Ontario today.