



Toronto gets a green 'B'

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City



Toronto's urban transportation practices are the fifth greenest in Canada, a new study has found.

"Toronto's grade of B is not bad. Toronto could, if it implemented the policies it announced, have a shot at getting first place. But there are some areas where Toronto are seriously behind," said Barry Appleton, whose private Appleton Charitable Foundation funded a study, which was conducted with the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business.

The study ranked the Greater Toronto Area in fifth place, tied with Montreal, and praised the city's commitment to replace all diesel-powered vehicles with ones fuelled by bio-diesel by 2015 and plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are in line with the goals of the Kyoto Protocol. The study, however, said that Toronto needs to adopt new greener technologies such as adopting hybrids and alternative fuel vehicles in the city's taxi and public transit fleet.

"I think Toronto has the plans outlined, but they're expensive," said Toronto Transit Commission chairman Adam Giambrone. "Until cities are financially viable, they're having trouble making basic needs and have trouble investing in programs that can even save them money. We need to solve the whole issue of

Their Toronto



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how cities interact and are funded before seeing major movement.”

The study found Toronto has the lowest number of registered vehicles per capita, meaning more people are taking public transit. To further reduce the number of motorists, Mr. Appleton suggested cities consider introducing free transit services in the downtown core, to increase transit use and ease gridlock. Mr. Giambrone said expanding routes is the better way to increase ridership. “We collect almost \$900-million in fares [each year] and to do a full, free system you’ll probably have to add to the service because when something is free, there’s usually more use for it. You’re looking at a cost of up to \$1-billion to provide free TTC service and you have to define what the downtown core is; is it all-day free service? Only during rush-hour?” said Mr. Giambrone.

“If you had \$200-million a year, you should use it to expand the system. We know it’s the best way to attract riders. Two-hundred-million-dollars a year will allow you to build one new subway station each year. You can always be in construction and over four to five years you’ll have a new line.”

Plus, he added: “What makes a downtown core resident anymore entitled to free transit than a resident in Etobicoke?”

Though Toronto received a “B” from the report, Appleton said none of the cities got an “A” because none were able to meet a tangible 10-year target that the study set up. Victoria was ranked first, followed by Vancouver and Ottawa-Gatineau. St. Catharines-Niagara, Barrie, Moncton, Sudbury and St. John’s ranked worst, each receiving an “F” for not following up on plans to improve air quality.

— *Karon Liu, National Post, photo by Peter J. Thompson, National Post*

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