

Corridor Rail Studies, 1970–2026

A Cross-Decade Analysis

Working synthesis · 30 documents of an expanding corpus · *Interim findings, subject to revision.*

ABSTRACT

This report synthesises thirty major studies of high-speed and higher-speed passenger rail in the Québec City–Windsor corridor produced between 1970 and 2026. Each was read against a single fixed set of thirty-four dimensions — sponsor and independence, evaluation method, capital cost, ridership, verdict, and treatment of carbon and wider benefits — with all monetary figures normalised to constant 2025 Canadian dollars. Nine patterns hold across the record. The bottom-line recommendation tracks who is asking and by what criterion rather than any change in the underlying engineering: vendors, proponents and advocates recommend building; independent governments defer; academics divide. Every study that runs the financial question finds the high-speed option cannot recover its capital from fares — a conclusion that now extends from VIA's own 1984 accounts to an independent 2026 model finding a structural multi-billion-dollar subsidy on the proponent's own costs. Capital estimates rise as the analysis becomes more rigorous, and ridership forecasts are specification-fragile and systematically optimistic, with the highest figures belonging consistently to the promoters. The current ALTO programme sits at the convergence of every one of these patterns. The record does not settle whether the railway should be built; it establishes, with unusual consistency, that the case for it strengthens as the analysis becomes less independent and weakens as it becomes more rigorous.

1 Purpose and scope

This report is a working synthesis of the thirty major studies of high-speed and higher-speed passenger rail in the Québec City–Windsor corridor assembled so far into the Initiative's comparative matrix. The matrix reads each source against a single fixed set of thirty-four dimensions, so that findings can be compared down each column — across the decades — rather than one report at a time. This document is the synthesis layer of that method: it is organised by recurring question, not as a chronological recap, and it remains provisional. Further documents are still to be ingested, and the readings below will firm up as they are.

The corpus spans fifty-six years and a deliberately wide range of institutional voices: a federal commission (1970), a Crown corporation across four decades (VIA Rail), competing equipment vendors, joint federal–provincial task forces, a full tri-government feasibility study and its component annexes, an incumbent airline-and-railway consortium, academic demand-modelling and financial work, a public-private-partnership consortium reviewed by a House of Commons committee, Transport Canada's own independent validation, a provincial special-advisor report, an independent think-tank, the federal Crown-corporation proponent's own prospectus, an independent university financial model, and a pair of 2026 advocacy business cases. That spread is the point: it lets apparent disagreement across eras be separated into three distinct sources — genuine change in the corridor's population and density; genuine change in technology; and change

in method, discount rate and political framing. Most apparent contradictions live in the third category, and attributing them correctly is the central analytical task.

A note on conventions.

Monetary figures are held in constant 2025 Canadian dollars using a documented consumer-price index, as a floor; heavy-civil and rail construction escalation runs hotter than general inflation, so normalised capital figures understate rather than overstate. Studies are referred to in the text by producer and year; the full corpus, with the two axes that carry most of the analytical weight, is set out in Appendix A, and the corridor's ridership forecasts are gathered in Appendix B. The house style for the eventual compiled brief is not yet settled, and the neutral presentation here should not be read as a design decision.

2 The corpus at a glance

Appendix A lists the thirty documents in chronological order with the two columns that do most of the work: who produced each study — its independence from the proponent — and the criterion on which its verdict rests. Reading those two columns together is already revealing. The new-build verdicts belong to the equipment vendors, to VIA's advocacy, and — at the modern end — to the proponent and to commissioned advocacy; the deferrals belong, without exception, to the independent governments; the incremental verdicts belong to the reviews and the commercial incumbents; and the academics divide, some cautioning about method, some endorsing, one recent independent model declining a verdict while finding the economics subsidy-dependent. The finding sections that follow trace that pattern and eight others across the record.

3 What the record shows — nine cross-decade findings

3.1 The verdict oscillates with the proponent and the lens, not with the physics.

The corridor's bottom-line recommendation swings back and forth across the decades in a way that tracks who is asking and by what criterion, not any change in the underlying engineering. The sequence runs: incremental (1970) → mixed (1984) → in a single month of 1990, one vendor arguing an incremental tilt while another argued new-build TGV → defer (1991 task force) → new-build advocacy (1992, VIA) → incremental “lower speed” (1993, the incumbent airline-and-railway study) → defer, with a majority-public warning (1995 tri-government) → new-build (1998, the Lynx public-private consortium) → incremental higher-speed-plus-freight (2002, VIAFast) → incremental HFR (2015). The modern tier does not break the pattern; it sharpens it. An academic study (2009) and a vendor (2010, SNCF) argued new-build; an independent tri-government update (2011, EcoTrain) again deferred; a 2014 pre-feasibility and two 2016 business cases — one provincial, one consultant — recommended building; a 2021 university model found the project self-funding; a 2022 vendor and the 2025 proponent both recommended new-build; and the 2026 record splits cleanly — an independent survey-based financial model declining a go verdict while finding a structural subsidy, and two advocacy submissions recommending building. Proponents, vendors and advocates reach for new-build; the independent governments defer; the reviews and the incumbents land on incremental. Against that fifty-six-year backdrop, a greenfield new-build recommendation is the conspicuous position of the sponsors, not the centre of gravity of the record.

3.2 High-speed rail repeatedly fails the return-to-private-capital test — including in proponents' own numbers, and now in an independent model of the present project.

Every study that runs the financial question arrives at the same place: the very-high-speed option cannot recover its capital from fares, and needs a large majority of public funding. VIA's own 1984 study returned a negative net present value; the 1990 Bombardier case needed roughly \$1.6 billion in public money; the 1991 task force found internal rates of return near zero and grants of 64–85 per cent; a 1991 academic analysis modelled the corridor as effectively a natural monopoly whose 300 km/h option returned barely 0.4 per cent, and argued that viability, if it exists, requires public ownership of the track with competed operations above it; VIA's own 1992 advocacy conceded an eight-per-cent return against a fifteen-per-cent private hurdle. The 1995 tri-government study made it official for three governments — “70% to 75% of the cost would have to be paid by the public sector” and a wholly-private option was “neither viable nor financeable” — and the 1998 Lynx proposal put \$7.5 billion of an \$11.1 billion project on government while transferring, on Parliament's reading, “the major part of any risk to governments.”

The modern tier confirms and extends the pattern. SNCF's 2010 study returned a negative net present value and an internal rate near four per cent; the 2011 EcoTrain financial return sat between roughly one and three-and-a-half per cent; the 2016 provincial go-decision found even its best segment recovering well under half its capital and its capital “not fully recoverable.” The sharpest word is the most recent: a 2026 financial model from McGill's transport research group, built on survey-grounded demand and the proponent's own cost range, finds the project needs about C\$53 billion in subsidy over fifty years and does not sustain itself until year 44 — and identifies the eight-per-cent private cost of capital in the proposed partnership as the assumption that drives the subsidy. Against all of this, the 2025 proponent prospectus claims the system will be revenue-positive and self-funding; the single most optimistic financial claim in the entire record, and the one the independent 2026 model most directly contradicts. On this evidence the subsidy is structural, not a failure of management.

3.3 There is a proponent-versus-independent cost gap — and real costs rise as the analysis gets more rigorous.

Where a proponent and an independent body cost the same object, the proponent's figure is lower, and the estimates climb as the costing deepens. VIA's own 1992 full-corridor figure (about \$11.3 billion in 2025 dollars) sat roughly twenty per cent below the 1991 task force's independent estimate (about \$14.9 billion); the more rigorous 1995 tri-government study came in higher still (about \$20 billion for the full corridor at 300 km/h); the 1995 SNC-Lavalin/Delcan engineering annex supplies the per-kilometre spine beneath those totals — roughly \$5.3–5.5 million per kilometre for a 200 km/h upgrade of existing right-of-way, \$6.5 million for 300 km/h on existing right-of-way, and \$7.6 million for 300 km/h on new right-of-way (1993 dollars, infrastructure only). The 2010 and 2011 studies extend the ladder upward (roughly \$33–35 billion and \$27–31 billion respectively in 2025 dollars).

The current ALTO-scale estimates form a new and much higher tier, and it is here the cost gap is starkest. The proponent's own range is \$60–90 billion (2024); the independent 2026 model builds up to about \$80 billion; yet from the same corner as the low early numbers, a 2026 advocacy submission returns to \$63 billion by assuming greenfield construction at \$50–60 million per kilometre — roughly a third of the Initiative's own friction-adjusted central figure near \$143 million

per kilometre, and below even the independent bottom-up \$70 million. The lesson recurs: the cheaper a corridor estimate looks, the thinner the costing beneath it — most visibly in a 2021 university study that reached “financially viable” only by discounting a decade-old figure by a flat 46 per cent, with no bottom-up build. Two cautions still hold. Cost figures are not comparable until one asks what they include — infrastructure-only sits below system cost, which sits below a financing-inclusive figure. And the incremental options remain a different order of magnitude: VIAFast in 2002 (about \$4.3 billion) and the 2015 HFR (about \$3.9 billion) are a small fraction of any high-speed proposal. The normalised ladder is set out in Appendix A's companion note; the direction of travel is unmistakable.

3.4 Demand forecasts are specification-fragile and systematically optimistic — a conclusion reached independently by academics, incumbents, Parliament and Transport Canada, and now by an independent 2026 survey.

The corridor's ridership numbers are less solid than they appear, and the record says so from several independent directions. The 1994 academic paper by Gaudry and Le Leyzour re-estimated the corridor's own demand model and showed the ordinary linear logit to be “fragile”: changing only the functional form, on identical data, swings the estimated value of time roughly fivefold and can flip the sign of key coefficients, so that the linear form “overestimates rail modal share” and “recovery of the initial investment could be delayed.” Transport Canada's own 2003 reviewers judged even the cheaper VIAFast proposal “systematically tending toward optimistic and aggressive assumptions.”

Laid side by side, the forecasts span an extraordinary range for the same corridor (Appendix B). The historic cluster runs from the 1993 incumbent study's 5.8 million through the tri-government study's 10–12 million; the high end has always belonged to the promoters, from SNCF's 2010 ceiling near 22.5 million to the 2025 proponent's 24 million by 2055 rising to 43 million, and a 2026 advocacy submission's 42 million for Toronto–Québec City and 56 million for the full corridor — the highest figures ever produced for this line. Against them, the only recent independent, survey-grounded forecast — McGill's 2026 work — lands near 10 million for 2050, roughly half the proponent's number and squarely within the historic reference class. Small changes in assumed reliability, frequency and fares swing these numbers by millions, which is why the most defensible forecasts are those anchored to observed behaviour rather than to the uplift a new system is assumed to create.

3.5 Freight de-confliction is the recurring physical crux — and the freight-dividend idea has a genuinely contested history.

How passenger service and freight coexist on the corridor's tracks runs through the whole record, and it is where the present HPR framework has its deepest roots — and its most important caution. VIA in 1992 put the incompatibility most categorically: passenger and freight are “inherently incompatible,” high-speed rail “cannot share existing tracks,” and needs new dedicated right-of-way. The 1995 SNC engineering study replaced that binary with a graded menu of options. Then VIAFast in 2002 proposed the move at the heart of the HPPR/HPFR logic: separate passenger and freight onto the corridor's two largely parallel rights-of-way, and count the freed freight capacity as a co-benefit — the freight-dividend, roughly twenty years early. But the same record supplies the counter-weight. VIAFast itself conceded the freight railways said they “do not need the additional capacity”; Transport Canada's 2003 reviewers found the freight case a preliminary “scoping”

estimate on decade-old data, with motor carriers dominating below 800 kilometres and shippers “wait-and-see,” and reclassified the project as “a passenger train project in a multi-purpose right-of-way.” The modern studies invoke dedicated-track de-confliction as the rationale for a new passenger-only railway, but add no new economic theory to it. The honest reading is unchanged: the freight-dividend is sound and well-precedented, but its realised value depends on demand the freight railways were not, at the time, asking for — a distinction the HPFR case is stronger for carrying explicitly.

3.6 Speed is only weakly rewarded; the speed-maximalists are the outliers.

On the evidence of the corpus, pushing to the highest speeds buys little additional ridership. The 1991 task force found 300 km/h only marginally the most attractive; the 1993 incumbent study found ridership essentially inelastic to speed — an eight-per-cent gain from 300 to 400 km/h — and recommended “lower speed”; the 1995 tri-government study preferred 300 to 200 on cost-neutral infrastructure but on the strength of the same fragile demand model; VIAFast judged 240 km/h sufficient; the 2011 EcoTrain work found roughly a nine-per-cent uplift from 200 to 300. Against that cluster, the uniform-300-km/h-everywhere schemes — VIA's 1992 threshold claim, the 1998 Lynx proposal, the 2021 university model and the 2025 proponent design — are the outliers, not the norm; tellingly, even the 2026 independent model quietly assumes average operating speeds of 200 to 250 km/h. The 180–240 km/h band at the centre of the HPR framework is not a compromise against the evidence; it is where the weight of the evidence already sits.

3.7 An institutional through-line — and a public-private-partnership accountability question raised decades ago.

Two lineages run through the record and arrive at the present. The first is institutional: VIA's 1984 feasibility study, its 1992 advocacy (in which it sought to be the operator), its 2002 VIAFast plan and the 2015 pivot to higher-frequency rail form a continuous line from VIA through the later joint project office to today's arrangements. The second is the financing structure. The 1995 tri-government study introduced public ownership of infrastructure leased to a private operator; the 1998 Lynx proposal made it a concession, with government funding the majority and carrying the residual risk while private equity took its return first. Both Parliament (1998) and Transport Canada's reviewers (2003) made the public-private risk-allocation critique explicitly and early: such structures can socialise risk while privatising return, and a headline government return can rest on a single favourable accounting assumption. The present programme inherits exactly this question. Its progressive-procurement model keeps public ownership of the corporation and assets while a private partner finances and operates — and the independent 2026 model shows the arithmetic that makes the question live: an eight-per-cent private cost of capital drives the fifty-year subsidy, and the plan's viability leans on some twelve billion dollars of assumed land-value capture. These are not new questions raised by the present debate; they are questions the corridor's own record answered, with concern, a generation ago.

3.8 Carbon is counted late, and in one direction only.

For most of the record — every study from 1970 to 2015 — no appraisal monetised carbon as a system cost or benefit at all. The 1992 advocacy catalogued pollution but not carbon dioxide; the 1995 tri-government study kept “atmospheric emissions” out of its net present value; the 1998 Lynx fuel-saving claim was judged “quite minor” by Parliament; VIAFast in 2002 built a strong

environmental case but did not carry it into the financial one; and the 2003 reviewers flagged that the whole benefit hinged on an auto-occupancy assumption for which “there is no uniform acceptable standard.” The modern tier finally monetises carbon — but only in the flattering direction. The 2010, 2011, 2016 and 2022 studies count operating modal-shift savings; a 2025 think-tank monetises them at roughly \$2.6–7.1 billion; the 2025 proponent goes furthest, headlining a 39-megatonne reduction — and the construction emissions of hundreds of kilometres of new concrete, steel and cleared land appear in none of them. Counted honestly on a full lifecycle, as the Initiative's own analysis finds, the current design is a net emitter for decades. A one-sided carbon account is not a rounding error; it is the difference between a climate asset and a climate cost, and it is the modern record's most consequential omission.

3.9 When the economics come in weak, a nation-building or regional case is brought in to carry them.

The most consistent rhetorical move in the record — and now the most prominent — is to re-ground a weak benefit-cost result in something the arithmetic cannot capture: national unity, regional development, industrial policy, a place among peer nations. The 2016 provincial go-decision recommended extending service to Windsor despite a benefit-cost ratio of 0.24; the 2010 vendor study argued for serving every city on the line; the 2022 vendor pitch leaned on made-in-Canada industrial benefits; the 2025 proponent reaches for a St. Lawrence Seaway analogy, “nation-shaping” language and a claimed 1.1 per cent of GDP; a 2025 think-tank frames Canada as the only G7 nation without high-speed rail. These arguments may be legitimate — nation-building is a real public good — but the record shows them doing the heaviest work precisely where the economics do not. That is worth naming, because it is where public money is most at risk, and because the appeal has grown louder as the independent financial findings have grown more cautious.

4 What the record implies for the present debate

Read together, the thirty studies place the current corridor project against a long and unusually consistent evidentiary backdrop. The present ALTO programme sits at the convergence of every pattern above: its prospectus is the purest promoter's case in the corpus — self-funding, revenue-positive, nation-shaping — while the most rigorous independent 2026 work finds a structural multi-billion-dollar subsidy on the proponent's own costs, and a two-report advocacy intervention the same year reaches a favourable verdict only by pairing the lowest plausible construction cost with the highest ridership ever forecast for the line, from an author with disclosed interests in the outcome. The Initiative's own modelling places the proponent design's benefit-cost ratio near 0.045, two orders of magnitude below the ratio a favourable advocacy case reports. Five implications follow directly, each a matter of where the weight of the record sits.

- **A greenfield new-build is the sponsors' position, not the record's centre of gravity.** The weight of fifty-six years is incremental upgrade and, at most, deferral pending a full public-cost accounting. New-build recommendations came from vendors, from a Crown corporation seeking the franchise, from the proponent, and from commissioned advocacy; the independent governments deferred.
- **A large majority-public cost should be the expected case.** Three governments concluded in 1995 that 70–75 per cent of the cost would be public and a private-only

structure unfinanceable; every financial study before and since converges there, up to and including the independent 2026 estimate of a C\$53-billion subsidy over fifty years.

- **Demand figures warrant independent audit, not acceptance.** A single-proponent forecast is, on this record, contingent on unreported modelling choices; the responsible precedents — the 1995 study's three independent forecasters, Transport Canada's independent freight estimate in 2003, McGill's 2026 survey at half the proponent's number — are exactly the discipline a present single-forecast process lacks.
- **The freight-dividend is worth making, and worth making carefully.** VIAFast establishes the concept's provenance; the 2003 validation establishes that its value is real only to the extent the freight railways actually want the capacity. The HPFR argument is more durable stated with that condition than without it.
- **The speed-band and cost evidence favour the moderate case.** The repeated, independent findings that speed is weakly rewarded and that costs rise with rigour are the empirical foundation for a moderate-speed, lower-cost framework — and both long predate the present debate.

5 Status, gaps, and next steps

This is a thirty-document reading of a corpus that is still expanding; the working register holds a further set of studies cited but not yet ingested, and the synthesis will continue to firm up. The most valuable outstanding items are the demand and financial annexes behind the 1995, 2002 and 2011 proposals (the three tri-government forecasting models; the Deloitte & Touche VIAFast demand work; the EcoTrain demand annexes), the SNCF study's per-city municipal reports, VIA's own 1989 review, the 1979 federal corridor economics study, the 1992 Royal Commission final report, and the 2022 procurement documents behind the present programme. Ingesting the demand annexes in particular would let the reference-class ridership ladder in Appendix B and the specification-fragility argument be stated with primary rather than secondary figures.

Three coding matters remain noted for the record: the “Demand/revenue” evaluation lens, introduced provisionally, is now supported by two independent instances and can be confirmed; a dedicated capital-cost / engineering lens would represent the SNC-type costing studies more honestly than the present residual category; and the independence axis now spans ten distinct positions, including the “Advocacy” code first used for the 2025–2026 tier. The house style for the compiled brief remains undecided.

Prepared for the ALTO HSR Citizen Research Initiative from the corridor-studies comparative matrix. Working synthesis — findings provisional pending further ingestion. Monetary figures in constant 2025 Canadian dollars; studies referred to by producer and year.

Appendix A The corpus at a glance

The thirty documents in chronological order. Identifiers are the matrix's ingestion-order keys. The two right-hand axes — independence and headline verdict — carry most of the analytical weight; reading them together is the substance of Finding 3.1.

ID	Year	Study — producing body	Independence	Verdict	Lens
D01	1970	Intercity Passenger Transport Study — CTC	Federal	Incremental	Profitability
D02	1984	High-Speed Passenger Rail in Canada — VIA	Crown corp	Mixed	Financial NPV
D06	1990	Review of Previous Studies — TRANSURB (O/Q Task Force)	Consultant	Deferred	Feasibility
D04	1990	A Pragmatic Approach (SPRINTOR) — ABB	Vendor	Incremental	Feasibility
D05	1990	The Canadian TGV Project — Bombardier / GEC Alsthom	Vendor	New-build HSR	Financial NPV
D07	1991	Rapid Train Task Force, Final Report — Ontario/Québec	Joint-gov	Deferred	Financial NPV
D24	1991	The Potential for Competition in Rail Carriage — Berkowitz	Academic	New-build HSR	Profitability
D09	1992	FAST TRACKS — VIA (advocacy)	Crown corp	New-build HSR	Financial NPV
D08	1993	HST Market Assessment — Air Canada / CP	Consultant	Incremental	Demand/revenue
D10	1994	Fragile Linear Logit / Box-Cox demand — Gaudry & Le Leyzour	Academic	—	Demand/revenue
D12	1995	Industrial Strategy (Vol II) — Simpson-Guerin consortium	Consultant	—	Multi-account
D13	1995	Routing & Costing Study — SNC-Lavalin / Delcan	Consultant	—	Feasibility
D11	1995	Québec–Ontario HSR Project, Final Report — tri-gov	Joint-gov	Deferred	BCR (economic)
D14	1998	The Lynx Proposal (via TRAN Appendix D) — Lynx consortium	Vendor	New-build HSR	Financial NPV
D15	2002	VIAFast — VIA Rail	Crown corp	Incremental	Financial NPV
D16	2003	VIAFast validation (enviro/socio-econ) — IBI for Transport Canada	Consultant	—	Multi-account
D17	2009	Infrastructure and the Economy (GGH) — Martin Prosperity Institute	Academic	New-build HSR	Feasibility
D18	2010	Socio-Economic Study of HSR (Québec–Windsor) — SNCF	Vendor	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D19	2011	Updated Feasibility Study (EcoTrain) — tri-government	Joint-gov	Deferred	BCR (economic)
D20	2014	Toronto–Kitchener–London HSR, Pre-Feasibility — Schabas	Consultant	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D03	2015	VIA Rail & the Future of Passenger Rail — Library of Parliament	Parl./indep.	Incremental	Feasibility
D21	2016	Preliminary Business Case, Toronto–Windsor — SDG (Steer)	Consultant	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D22	2016	High Speed Rail in Ontario — Special Advisor (Collenette)	Provincial	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D28	2021	Toronto–Montreal Economic Analysis — GEPL, Munk School (U of T)	Academic	New-build HSR	Financial NPV
D23	2022	Speed and Frequency — Alstom (observations)	Vendor	New-build HSR	Feasibility
D25	2025	All Aboard — C.D. Howe Institute	Advocacy	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D26	2025	Fast Forward — ALTO (proponent prospectus)	Advocacy	New-build HSR	Feasibility
D29	2026	Conceptual Design & Business Case (Senate) — Schabas	Advocacy	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)
D27	2026	Corridorwide Survey & Financial Analysis — McGill TRAM	Academic	—	Profitability

ID	Year	Study — producing body	Independence	Verdict	Lens
D30	2026	Eastern Ontario Route, Highway 401 — Schabas & Antinucci (for KAP)	Advocacy	New-build HSR	BCR (economic)

Independence and verdict tokens are the matrix's controlled vocabulary. “Advocacy” denotes a document whose function is to argue a case (a proponent prospectus, a think-tank brief, or commissioned/expert advocacy), distinct from the independent-government and academic categories. A dash denotes an analytical study that reaches no go/no-go verdict.

Appendix B Ridership forecasts across the record

Annual-ridership forecasts for the corridor, in chronological order. The range is nearly an order of magnitude, and the high end belongs consistently to the promoters (Finding 3.4). Figures are not strictly comparable — footprints, horizons and definitions differ, and some are segment rather than full-corridor — which is itself part of the finding. The single most useful comparison is between the proponent tier and the one recent independent, survey-grounded forecast.

Study (year)	Producer	Annual riders	Horizon / basis
Rapid Train Task Force (1991)	Joint-gov	7.8 M	Full corridor forecast
Rail-competition study (1991)	Academic	~7.8 M	6.4% modelled mode share
Air Canada / CP (1993)	Consultant	5.8 M	Corridor — the low end of the record
Tri-government (1995)	Joint-gov	10–12 M	Full corridor, 300 km/h
Lynx (1998)	Vendor	11.1 M	Québec City–Toronto
SNCF (2010)	Vendor	up to 22.5 M	Corridor ceiling scenario
EcoTrain (2011)	Joint-gov	10–11 M	Full corridor
GEPL / Munk (2021)	Academic	2.7 – 10.5 M	Toronto–Montreal segment, to yr 30
C.D. Howe (2025)	Advocacy	8–15 M / 12–21 M	Modelled conventional / HSR scenarios
ALTO prospectus (2025)	Advocacy	24 M (2055) – 43 M (2084)	Full network, proponent
McGill TRAM (2026)	Academic	~9–10.5 M	2025–2050, survey-grounded (independent)
Schabas “Optimized” (2026)	Advocacy	42 M / 56 M	Toronto–QC / full corridor, 2050

For reference, the proponent's current planning figure (Cadence / ALTO) is about 22 million for 2050. The 2026 independent survey-based forecast (~10 million) sits at roughly half that and within the historic reference class; the 2025–2026 advocacy figures (24–56 million) sit well above every prior estimate for the line. General comparability caveats in the note above apply.