

Toronto Transit Consultation Meetings

May 31, 2016

Highlights Report

This concise Highlights Report has been prepared to provide the City of Toronto, TTC, and Waterfront Toronto with a snapshot of the feedback captured at the public meeting held on May 31, 2016. A more detailed report of the feedback captured during this phase of consultations will be prepared in the coming days.

Introduction

On May 31 2016, the City of Toronto, City Planning Division (Transportation Planning), and the TTC hosted a public meeting on four key transit initiatives currently being planned. The meeting was held at the Scarborough Civic Centre, located at 150 Borough Drive, Toronto.

The public meeting presented the various transit projects being studied as part of a network approach to transit planning undertaken by the City, Waterfront Toronto, and TTC , including:

SmartTrack, including the Eglinton West LRT: the integration of SmartTrack and GO Regional Express Rail to improve rapid transit service on three GO corridors in Toronto, and the introduction of the Eglinton West LRT, .

Relief Line: Present results of the evaluation of alignment options

Waterfront Transit Reset: Present preliminary transit concepts and their associated evaluation framework.

Scarborough Transit Planning: Present the evaluation of options for the Scarborough Subway Extension and LRT connecting Kennedy Station and the University of Toronto.

The meeting featured a series of panels and interactive feedback activities on each project. Participants could freely move between display panels and activities at their own pace, and speak with project staff from the City, Waterfront Toronto, TTC and Metrolinx.

Following an introductory presentation on Coordinated Network Transit Planning given by James Perttula (Acting Director, Transit and Sustainable Transportation, City of Toronto) and Mike Logan (Program Manager, Transit Implementation Unit, City of Toronto) at 7:00 PM, participants had the opportunity to ask questions of clarification as well as provide feedback.

Approximately 200 individuals attended the public meeting, including Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker (Ward 38), Councillor Paul Ainslie (Ward 43) and the Mayor's office.

Highlights of Participant Feedback

Questions of Clarification

The discussion captured during the question and answer period following the overview presentation is summarized below. Questions are noted with a “Q”, comments with “C” and answers with “A.” Answers were provided by James Perttula (Acting Director, Transit and Sustainable Transportation, City of Toronto) and Mike Logan (Acting Program Manager, Transit Implementation Unit, City of Toronto), unless noted otherwise.

Q: When will the Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE) construction begin?

A: Dependent on final Council approval, construction is expected to start late 2018 or early 2019.

Q: There are concerns across Scarborough regarding the elimination of stations and stops. What is the rationale for reducing the number of stops from three (3) to one (1)? Will land prices increase in Scarborough because of this?

A: A great deal of analysis has gone into the decision to eliminate the two (2) stops. The express subway will offer nearly as much benefit as the 3-stop subway would, but for much less money. The express subway is projected to actually attract more net-new transit riders to the network and will support the growth of the Scarborough Centre.

There is opportunity for property values to increase in some places and not others. From a planning perspective, it is healthy to direct growth in the areas where it makes sense and protect the areas where growth does not make sense.

Q: Will the LRT make driving more difficult since you are removing two lanes of traffic?

A: As we look to the future, we need to consider options beyond cars because we do not have the ability to build more roads – LRT is one option to transport more people in the future. Other transit options are also being considered to allow us to transport more people where they need to go. After implementation of LRTs, corridors would be able to carry fewer cars but more people. We are examining traffic impacts determined in 2009 and will be considering mitigation measures when amending the Environmental Project Report.

Q: Why is the TTC so far behind transit services in comparison to other cities such as Hong Kong?

A: TTC and City council are trying to advance a number of improvements to the transit system, recognizing that Toronto is behind in our investment. We are at a stage right now where Council is trying to push ahead as much as possible on many different fronts.

Q: Could the Guildwood GO Station become a hub for LRT, VIA and GO vehicles? People going to the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC) could come to this station and travel directly instead of through downtown.

A: We recognize that RER stations, in addition to the SmartTrack stations, will be very important in the future. Metrolinx is leading ongoing updates to many stations in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. We want to ensure that the Guildwood GO Station is effectively connected to the Eglinton East LRT. The suggestion to create a hub at Guildwood GO Station is a good one.

Q: A Relief Line station at Pape was mentioned, but why not connect the Relief Line to Danforth GO Station as it will help to reduce the number of subway and GO riders heading to Union Station?

A: Many options were considered regarding the Relief Line but we found that the best catchment for people coming from the east would be at Pape. Interchange stations further east did not allow for the best future northerly extension of the Relief Line.

C: There should be an airport-style underground conveyer belt linking Danforth GO Station with the TTC main subway station.

Q: Why was the projected ridership in 2013 14,000 people, but today the ridership is 7,000? The politicians sold the community on the SSE based on the ridership number projected in 2013.

A: The projection of 14,000 people was last presented to City Council in March 2016. This is the projected ridership on the 3-stop subway extension without SmartTrack included in the network. Projected ridership is around 11,000 for the 3-stop subway when SmartTrack is added to the network.

The express subway ridership numbers (7,300) are only counting subway riders who board at the future Scarborough Centre Station, because riders who would board at a future Lawrence East Station on the 3-stop subway would need to board at Kennedy Station instead. The model projects that other riders are using SmartTrack. The modelling projects that the overall number of new riders on the transit network that includes the express subway extension would actually be higher than with the network that includes the three-stop subway. We must keep in mind that transit ridership projection is about the entire network, not just about how many people are on a single line.

Q: Why is the SRT not being upgraded at a much lower cost instead of adding the Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE)? The SRT is fully capable of handling the projected 7,000 ridership.

A: This idea has been put forward in the past but Council made the decision in October 2013 to move ahead with the SSE. Therefore, we have been asked by Council to determine the best way to create the extension.

C: The complete development of the Avenues has not happened in the last 50 years, therefore I doubt it will happen in the near future. We should experiment with the new stretch buses and electric buses.

Q: Why has no one mentioned the Missing Link proposal and why is Council not considering it right now? It proposes to move freight traffic off of the midtown corridor and free the corridor to allow for high-speed express transit.

A: The City of Toronto has been engaged with other municipalities regarding the Missing Link proposal. An update will be going to Council regarding the proposal in the near future. The proposal is still in early development. The City is not dismissing it.

Q: I understand that the money saved from eliminating two (2) of the stops from the SSE would create more money for the Eglinton East LRT to UTSC. However, it would make more sense for someone travelling to UTSC to take the subway up to Scarborough Centre and then across Ellesmere, rather than waiting for 18 stops on an LRT route. This would give us the money back to build a Lawrence Station. Why is this not being considered?

A: One of the other long-term projects that Metrolinx is looking at is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along Ellesmere from Durham Region into Scarborough Centre. While the idea has not yet progressed, this may provide another means of access into UTSC. When discussing the Eglinton East LRT, although access to UTSC is important, the LRT would also improve service to that entire underserved area including five (5) Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

C: Express bus service in that area (116 Express) and weekend service on alternative routes was removed – all approved by City Council. How are these changes made without input from the bus riders? There are schools, the hospital, and new PanAm complex development that need to be served, and it takes us 45 mins to travel one-way from Kennedy Station.

Q: What happens to the businesses in the area that may be expropriated? What kind of compensation will there be?

A: There are representatives from TTC Real Estate present that can answer specific questions. The letters that some property owners have received were intended to start the conversation regarding which properties may be impacted by the project. Our desire is to negotiate with property owners rather than expropriate.

Q: There are concerns regarding congestion caused by the LRT (i.e., reduced lanes) along Kingston Road. I would like to understand why the 2009 traffic impact study has not been updated as there certainly seems to be increases in traffic.

A: The approved LRT Environmental Project Report (EPR) in 2009 included extensive traffic impact studies. At this point we are reviewing that study, and are aware that things may have changed since then. We will be going to Council to ask for direction on proceeding with the LRT. Proceeding to an amendment of the EPR would include more detailed analysis to determine how the traffic has changed since 2009 and what changes to the LRT might be necessary as a result.

Q: When can we expect to see a construction mitigation strategy implemented at Guildwood Station to reduce the noise level?

A: We cannot speak for Metrolinx, who are undertaking work at that station soon. With respect to the Eglinton East LRT, we are asking council for direction on how to proceed. This process will include more detailed work on scheduling, noise impact assessment and mitigation strategies to be implemented.

Q: Part of the rationale for removing the Lawrence subway stop was including a Lawrence SmartTrack stop. However, in tonight's presentation it was mentioned that options are under consideration that do not include a Lawrence stop. If Lawrence is removed completely from the SSE and the SmartTrack plans, will there be any options available for access to Lawrence?

A: We recognize that SmartTrack is a key component improving transit in Scarborough. For SmartTrack, there are two (2) scenarios: One where we would see all three (3) stations in Scarborough available and the other where we would see only one (1) station available. We are looking at Lawrence, Ellesmere and Finch stations to determine the outcome. We recognize that Lawrence would be a priority to provide network connectivity.

Q: Is it not a better idea to host separate public meetings for each project instead of discussing all upcoming projects at the same time?

A: We recognize that we are attempting to cover a lot of ground at this meeting. We have attempted to spend a very small portion of the evening discussing the other projects and have focused primarily on the projects in Scarborough. It is also important for people to understand the broader context, including the planning for the other projects across the network.

Q: Is there a plan in place to save the residential properties that are at risk of being expropriated?

A: We would recommend that anyone who has a specific letter about a property issue speak with a TTC Real Estate representative for more in-depth information. Representatives are available this evening.

C: The SSE name should be changed to the Toronto East Line to unify the City.

Q: Is it possible to keep the two additional stations from the original SSE plan (Lawrence Station and Sheppard Station) on the table for future potential development?

A: There is nothing to preclude these two stations being considered for future development.

Q: If the subway is built under McCowan Road, close to Stanwell Drive where I live, will I feel the vibration from the subway?

A: [provided after the meeting]: Noise and vibration from the subway will generally be imperceptible in the urban context. As an example, the TYSSE is designed so that nearby properties will register between 10 and 30 dBA (between “barely audible” and “a soft whisper”). Vibration levels will also be below recommended level. Noise and vibration will be assessed in accordance with the TTC/Ministry of the Environment protocol. Compliance with the TTC/MOE protocol and City of Toronto bylaws avoid adverse noise/ vibration impacts on sensitive noise receptors.

Q: Why can't the alignment run straight up McCowan, then west across Triton to the existing Scarborough Centre Transit Station?

A: Constructing the future station in the same location as the existing Scarborough Centre Station would require shut down of Line 3 for 5-6 years, which has been identified as an extremely significant impact.

We have studied various options regarding the placement of the subway station. We studied options going straight down McCowan Avenue but found the constructability challenges and utility issues were particularly challenging and costly. We also studied how best to provide a connection to existing riders in the western quadrant as well as people in the eastern quadrant. Our studies led us to the borough alignment shown on the maps.

Q: Can you guarantee to the people of Scarborough that grade separations will be in place before RER operation?

A: Planning work for some grade separations are already underway including Steeles Avenue. We recognize that there are multiple locations along the line that will require grade separation and have identified those locations with Metrolinx. Metrolinx is leading this work.

Q: Please focus planning on the long-term rather than short-term. Will the north/south line be joining Yonge? How will the LRT be able to negotiate the Morningside hill? Has anyone studied the issues with the LRT in Edmonton?

A: Our work is all about long-term planning, for example, the development of Scarborough Centre. We are also studying long-term population and employment projections to determine what will be required in the future.

Q: Two members of my family are property owners along the LRT affected area on Morningside. When I first spoke to the project manager I was told that all legal fees and market value would be paid for their homes; but six months after that meeting we had depreciation in the value. Why is there an inconsistency in the messaging we are hearing?

A: We need to amend the 2009-approved Environmental Project Report, therefore the property impacts will need to be confirmed. The process will be similar to the process that has already begun for the properties impacted by the SSE.

Q: Why, after hosting multiple public meetings where people are expressing their interest in keeping Lawrence Station, are you planning to omit it? If Metrolinx decides not to build the RER stop and the City has not planned for the stop, then we have no stop.

A: We recognize that the situation regarding Lawrence has evolved since the first public meeting. Lawrence East is an important corridor and the SmartTrack Station is still being studied. The area surrounding SmartTrack, particularly toward Midland, is an area targeted for growth development in the future. When discussing SmartTrack, we are discussing an asset owned by Metrolinx, not the City. That said, the City is working with Metrolinx to determine how everything will work together. We are confident that Metrolinx will continue to work cooperatively with the City in the future to determine how best to provide transit access to people in Toronto.

Next Steps

A more detailed report of all consultation activities will be made available after this phase of consultation. Comments must be submitted by June 10, 2016 to ensure inclusion in this report.