

Don Mills Road Light Rail Transit Environmental Assessment

1. What is the City planning for the future of Don Mills Road?

Considerable population growth has been forecast for the Don Mills corridor. The City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) are carrying out an Environmental Assessment to identify an 18 km light rail transit (LRT) route in the Don Mills Road corridor extending from Steeles Avenue to the Bloor-Danforth subway, with options for providing continuous service to downtown. The goal is to provide fast, reliable transit service for customers and to reduce traffic congestion, which will reduce the harmful emissions that cause greenhouse gases in our air.

2. What is an Environmental Assessment, or EA?

An Environmental Assessment is a study which assesses the potential environmental effects and benefits of a project on the environment. EAs are conducted early in the planning stages of a project to provide information that is valuable to the decision makers. The Environmental Assessment process provides a framework for studying the transit route. Public consultation is an important part of the process.

3. Why was Don Mills selected for this process?

In 2005, Toronto City Council adopted the recommendations of the Don Valley Corridor Transportation Master Plan. This plan investigated a variety of options aimed at improving transit capacity in the corridor extending from Steeles Avenue to the downtown core. Among the initiatives recommended as high priorities in this study is the introduction of improved higher order transit service along Don Mills Road between the Don Mills station (Sheppard subway line) and the Bloor/Danforth subway, with options for providing continuous service to the downtown area. Also, in March of 2007, TTC released its Transit City Light Rail Plan, which identified Don Mills Road as one of its LRT corridors.

4. What is LRT?

“LRT” stands for Light Rail Transit. There are two basic criteria that are generally required for a facility to be called “LRT”: electrically powered rail vehicles with power supplied from overhead wires – which allows them to operate on a city street – and operation of these vehicles in a dedicated right-of-way. The vehicles can be operated individually, or attached together and operated in ‘trains’. This right-of-way can take many forms – from lanes in the middle of the street, to hydro corridors or abandoned railway corridors.

Two other characteristics of modern LRT lines in North America is “all-door” loading (not just front doors) and there is normally a much greater distance between stops as compared to the stops on a typical bus route.

5. Why is LRT preferred over buses?

LRT is more comfortable for riders, quieter, has no emissions on the street, and is far superior in carrying capacity in a constrained environment such as an arterial roadway. Buses in dedicated lanes, sometimes called BRT, or bus rapid transit, cannot easily accommodate 3,000 people – the peak hour demand projected on Don Mills Road - unless the bus way includes by-pass lanes at intersections to allow some buses to operate “express” and pass “local buses” stopped to serve customers. Given that there are a variety of important objectives for Don Mills Road – in addition to high quality transit – such as a comfortable walking environment, attractive streetscape, bike lanes, etc., there is not sufficient width available to allow for the construction of a by-pass lane to be added to the transit right of way.

6. What options for the LRT route are being considered?

The LRT route will follow Don Mills Rd. from Steeles Ave. in the north to about Overlea Blvd/ Millwood Rd. From there, the City is bringing forward several possible options for the route including along Pape Ave., Broadview Ave. and Bayview Ave.

7. Where will the Don Mills LRT connect to Bloor-Danforth subway line?

Determining how the Don Mills LRT will connect to the Bloor-Danforth subway line is one of the key points to consider in this study. Currently, Castle Frank, Broadview, and Pape stations are all being considered as potential connection points for this LRT.

8. Will the LRT run in the middle of the street?

It is envisioned that the LRT will operate in the middle of the street, in dedicated lanes. However, some situations may require further examination to determine if this is the best option depending on local circumstances.

9. How can the public participate in the EA process?

Residents and business owners in the area are invited to see the City’s proposals and can provide information about how the project will affect them and their community. Residents can also provide valuable advice about future transit stops that can be used along the routes being considered. TTC and City staff will make recommendations and, ultimately, City Council will make the final decision on this matter.

10. Could private property be impacted as a result of the project?

Yes, it is possible that there will be impacts to property as a result of this project. The challenge of the Don Mills project is to build a highly efficient transit line in an existing urban environment. The purpose of the EA is to minimize the impact that the project will have on existing residential and commercial property and the natural environment. The City and the TTC are working to minimize impacts wherever possible.

11. How will the project be funded?

It is anticipated that two-thirds of the project will be funded by the Provincial Government’s Move Ontario initiative and one-third will come from the Federal Government.