

## Questions & Answers (Update)

February 8, 2012

*Front Street Reconfiguration from Bay Street to York Street  
Municipal Class Environmental Assessment*

The primary information about this project has been published in the Public Information Centre #1 & #2 display boards, newsletter and flyers, all of which can be downloaded at [www.toronto.ca/union\\_station/front](http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/front)

The questions and answers below provide additional details that supplement the display boards and newsletter.

### **General**

- 1. What is the estimated cost for constructing this proposed project?**

Constructing the design proposed in this study would cost approximately \$7 million.

It is important to note that, independent of this project, all of Front Street needs to be reconstructed. This is a result of the overlapping construction areas associated with the TTC Union Station Second Platform, Union Station Revitalization, and the Northwest PATH Connection projects. A key intent of this Environmental Study was to identify a "new and improved" design for Front Street so that the reconstruction work would not simply reinstate Front Street to the condition it was in prior to its disruption in 2011. In avoiding some of the costs that other projects would have incurred, it is more cost-efficient to do the work at this time.
- 2. Is there funding for the construction of this project?**

The project is not fully funded; funds will have to be included and approved in the Transportation Services Capital Budget.
- 3. What are the next steps? When will construction start and how long will it take?**

Should Council approve the recommended design upon its review by Public Works and Infrastructure Committee (February 15, 2012) and subsequent Council meeting on March 5 then staff would proceed to file a Notice of Completion for the mandatory 30 day period for public review. Assuming any concerns raised are resolved, the City may proceed. The City would work with TTC to coordinate schedules such that the basic infrastructure would be in place by mid-2014. Some surface enhancements may follow, depending on funding.

## **Alternative Designs**

- 4. Will there be a pedestrian scramble at the Front St & Bay St. or the Front St. & York St. intersections?**

With the reduced crossing distances and wider sidewalks provided by the removal of one lane in each direction, a pedestrian scramble will not be required and is not in the recommended plan.
  
- 5. Why is a full closure not the preferred solution? Wouldn't a closure best meet the pedestrian realm objectives?**

Full closure was given significant consideration as Alternative 7 (Complete Urban Plaza) during Phase 2 of the study ([see materials from Public Information Centre #1](#)). For service and access reasons, the idea of simply making all of Front Street between York Street and Bay Street a pedestrian plaza is not feasible. The closure design included a cul-de-sac turnaround on each side of a large plaza.

This was not the preferred solution for several reasons including: the roadway space needed for a bus turnaround only provided opportunity for minor sidewalk expansion and no space for trees in the sidewalk; lack of alternative locations for taxi and passenger drop-off / pick up activities serving Union Station; traffic volumes would be significantly increased on King Street; lack of through access would be inconvenient for near-by business; and Front Street at Union Station has always been a two way street.
  
- 6. Why not build a pedestrian bridge or tunnel instead of street level pedestrian crossing, and thus maintain maximum space for vehicles?**

A pedestrian bridge is not feasible as it would have to meet the City's Accessibility guidelines, which would result in long ramps as well as inconvenient stairs. Such a design would detract from the historic view of the buildings, and would not likely be used by pedestrians seeking the shortest route to their destination.

The existing PATH system uses pedestrian tunnels connecting to and from Union Station under Front Street. The PATH connections are being enhanced, including a new North West PATH to Wellington St. and other new potential connections going east and south (see [PATH Master Plan Study](#)). Even with these additions to the PATH, increased street level pedestrian movement will require expanded sidewalks in the near future.
  
- 7. Why not use Bay St., York St., or the back (south side) of Union Station for taxi/vehicle loading?**

Both York Street and Bay Street serve a higher volume of traffic than Front Street. Reducing lanes for loading activities would cause much worse congestion than the plan proposed for Front Street. Taxi loading is available on the south side of Union Station on Bremner Boulevard, but this newly built space is very limited and frequently congested with pedestrians and vehicle traffic related to the Air Canada Centre, and surrounding retail, office and residential buildings.

## Streetscape

8. The plan only shows spaces for two street food vendors on the north side of Front Street, with none on the south side. Could more street food vendors be permitted, such as on the south side and in the plaza?

The two food vendor locations recommended (see [PIC #2 display panels PDF, page 21](#)) are an "urban design concept" and do not represent any final decision by the City. These two locations on the north side near the pedestrian crossing, are options for consideration in the future by [Municipal Licensing & Standards](#), which is the body responsible for street vendor permits. Currently there are no licensed food vendor locations on the north side of Front Street in this area.

As part of the [Union Station Revitalization](#), great effort and expense is being dedicated to restoring and improving the Station façade and introducing new glass roof covers over the moats. In order to reduce the amount of bird droppings that would degrade the quality of the space and create additional maintenance requirements, the City's consultant has recommended that any food source (e.g. food vendors) be removed from close proximity to the Station. This was an important consideration in proposing the recommended future vending locations be limited to the north side of Front Street, further away from the station.

In addition to the above concerns, any future vending locations would need to be placed outside of high pedestrian flows, and meet the criteria of the [Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 315 - Street Vending](#), which is undergoing review and modification. Under the current Municipal Code, any objection from adjacent property owners would cancel new applications for vending permits, which could also limit possible permit locations in the area.

An additional restriction has been placed on objects, such as vendors, in the plaza by Parks Canada, which governs the plaza and other elements of Union Station through a Heritage Easement Agreement (see *question #15*).

As a result of these various factors, the future of street food vending on Front Street near Union Station is uncertain.

The Changes to Front Street at Union Station study does recommend that any approved food vendors have upgraded facilities to complement the Station Revitalization and grand civic plaza being created.

If any new permit spaces are approved, the selection process of who would receive the permit has yet to be determined, although the long standing tradition of independent owners would be recognized.

9. **How will signage and way-finding be improved, e.g. signs directing people how to get from TTC to GO Bus, trains, to go to near-by tourist attractions.** A signage plan is being created as part of the Union Station Revitalization project. This plan will extend from inside to outside of Union Station, providing clear arrows to help pedestrians find their way around. Information pillars are recommended for the south side of Front Street near both York Street and Bay Street. Two way-finding signs are also planned to be located in the plaza.
10. **Will the design support street closures for special events?** Provisions are being made for temporary partial and temporary complete street closures that could allow for any number of public events in front of Union Station.
11. **Why plan to use the plaza for special events, which will negatively affect passengers? The city has many other possible venues.** When the revitalization of the station is completed it is anticipated that the station will create the "new gateway to the waterfront" and as such this focal point will become a natural location to host special events. Efforts will be made to minimize pedestrian flow impacts or avoid peak passenger times.
12. **What new activities might take place in the expanded plaza?** The plaza may host such special events as concerts, Canada Day celebrations and other civic events.
13. **What artistic elements are included in the streetscape design?** No public art is being proposed as part of the design recommended from this study. The opportunity remains for the City to include artistic elements during detail design or at a later date.
14. **Why not add more trees and/or planters on the south side, e.g. in the plaza?** No trees are recommended to be planted along the south side of the street in order to restore the historic panoramic and sweeping view of Union Station and the Dominion Building. This is consistent with the vision for the Union Station Revitalization. Movable planters could be included in the future, independent of this project.
15. **We understand Parks Canada has control over Union Station plaza and desire to 'de-clutter' the plaza, which limits options for vendors, bike parking, seating and other amenities. Who at Parks Canada should be contacted to discuss this issue?** When the City purchased the station in 2000 a condition of sale was that the City was to enter into an Heritage Easement Agreement (HEA) with Parks Canada. The HEA governs all aspects of use, interventions and restoration of the station which Parks Canada has approval authority over. Parks Canada requested that the city adhere to the original design as much as possible. The original design of the plaza was to be clear of all objects with the exception of the clock to allow for an unobstructed view of the building and uninterrupted pedestrian flows. The Parks Canada contact is Robert Moreau, Director of Heritage Programs Branch at 819-994-4929

## **Vehicle Traffic and Parking**

16. **Will the lane reductions on Front Street cause traffic congestion on Front Street and other streets?**
- Compared to existing conditions, average vehicle delay on Front Street in peak periods is anticipated to increase by about 10-15 seconds. The average vehicle delay at the Front Street/Bay Street intersection is expected to be 21 seconds during the morning peak hour and 32 seconds during afternoon peak hour. The average vehicle delay at the Front Street/York Street intersection is expected to be 47 seconds in the morning peak hour and 38 seconds in the afternoon peak hour.
- Front Street is currently, and will continue to be, used heavily by taxis and motorists accessing Union Station or adjacent businesses. Since Front Street is less of a through route than other nearby streets means that the diversion of traffic away from Front Street due to the narrowing project is relatively minor. Traffic models indicate that the traffic diversion would be approximately 50 vehicles during weekday peak periods, translating to an increase in the range of 1% to 8% in vehicle traffic on alternate routes such as Adelaide Street, King Street, Richmond Street, Wellington Street, Bremner Boulevard and Harbour Street.
17. **Could there be off-site taxi queuing and taxi marshalling? If so, how will that work and who will be responsible for it?**
- While it is recognized that off-site taxi marshalling could improve the taxi operations, there is currently no marshalling system in place. Potential solutions for offsite taxi queuing are beyond the scope of this study.
18. **If there is only one lane in each direction, wouldn't there be backups caused by double parking or vehicles edging their way in and out of lay-bys?**
- The street will be designed to enforce the message to motorists not to block the traffic flow. Wider lanes (e.g. 4.8m) will be more forgiving, allowing cars to edge around vehicles that are not fully in the lay-bys, reducing the chance of backups. The median will also be mountable, making it easier for emergency vehicles to get around any blockages.
- Some have suggested that enhanced parking enforcement (similar to the traffic marshalling at Pearson Airport) could help direct efficient use of the lay-by parking areas and to keep traffic moving. Any decision on marshalling activity is an operational matter that is beyond the scope of this EA study.

19. **How many cars, taxis and buses can be accommodated in the lay-by spaces provided?**
- According to City of Toronto standard lengths for parallel parking spaces, each of the four 60m lay-bys could accommodate nine cars for a total of 36 cars at any one time, plus two 15m lay-bys for accessible vehicle only parking. Alternatively, one 60m lay-by could accommodate a maximum of four buses, or for example two buses and four cars.

Two of the lay-bys (north-east and south-west) are dedicated to taxis, providing 18 taxi spaces. The lay-by in front of the Royal York Hotel would be used for varying hotel related loading needs, including taxis, limos and buses. The south-east lay-by would be used for private vehicle loading, including buses.

## ***Cycling Infrastructure***

20. **Why is there no bike lane planned for Front Street at Union Station?**
- This section of Front Street is being turned into a pedestrian priority zone where all vehicle traffic is expected to slow down and watch for pedestrians. If bicycle lanes were included they would require a wider crossing distance in the mid-block raised pedestrian crossing area. Without bicycle lanes this pedestrian crossing is significantly narrowed to just two vehicle lanes, which encourages both drivers and cyclists to reduce their speeds. Shared lane markings (sharrows) will remind drivers to be aware of cyclists. In the mid-block raised pedestrian crossing area cyclists are encouraged to take the lane and proceed cautiously through this "slow" area.
21. **Could the shared lane markings (sharrows) be more frequent, continued through the mid-block table top pedestrian crossing and centered in the lane?**
- Yes, all these options for use of the sharrows are possible and will be considered during detail design (see Question #3 re: next steps). The drawings shown in the Public Information Centre panels are only representative of the general intent. During detail design City staff and consultants will refine the plan according to best practices, standards and the approved vision for the space.
22. **How many outside bike lock-ups (e.g. post and ring) will be provided? How does this compare to the current number? Could more be added?**
- Prior to 2010 construction, there were a total of 113 short-term bicycle parking spaces on Union Station property and 80 secure long-term bike parking spaces in the York Teamway Bike Station. An additional 16 bike parking spaces were located on City property on the north side of Front Street.

This project along with the Union Station Revitalization project would result in approximately 67 short-term bike parking spaces and 278 long-term secure bike parking spaces on Union Station property. This number includes 7 bike ring stands on either end Front Street plaza, providing 28 spaces not shown in the Public Information Centre #2 panels. An additional 32 bike parking

spaces will be provided on the north side of Front Street in this area. As well, 34 bike spaces have been installed on the north side of Bremner Blvd near the south approach to Union Station.

Bike parking can be changed independent of this study.

23. **Why are the BIXI rental stations located so far from the entrances to Union Station? Could they be moved closer?**
- The City is aiming to provide stations for between 40 and 60 Bixi bicycles on Front Street near Union Station. Bixi bicycle stations (bike sharing) will be located on the northwest corner of Front Street and York Street and the northeast corner of Front Street and Bay Street. Bixi stations are exclusively solar powered and need to be in sunny locations. Spaces under a roof (such as in the teamways on either side of Union Station) are not feasible. Spaces on the south side of Front Street are cast in shadow, requiring frequent battery replacement. BIXI stations are movable and may change location in the future.

## **Other Specifics**

24. **What changes are likely to the street configurations on Front Street east and west of Union Station? How far?**
- Intended changes to the lanes are only to match intersections to the new design, and may extend as much as 50 metres beyond each intersection. See [PIC #2 Panel 24](#), which shows the Technically Preferred Design extended past both intersections.
25. **What considerations and accommodations were provided for people with disabilities (e.g. visually impaired, users of wheel chairs and walkers,)?**
- The Union Station Revitalization and Front Street designs follow accessibility guidelines, including curbless crossings at intersections. The mid-block crossing will also be curbless with textured strips to delineate the edge of the sidewalk for visually impaired pedestrians. Additional benefits in the design include wider sidewalks and improved lighting. Exclusive space is provided for accessible pick-up and drop-off (e.g. TTC Wheel Trans) within the table top lay-bys on both the north and south side. Barrier-free accommodations were thoroughly integrated into the Union Station Revitalization design.
26. **U-turns can be dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Could U-turns be not allowed?**
- U-turns are required by taxi drivers servicing Royal York Hotel and Union Station. The pedestrian priority nature of the new design will require all vehicles to move slower and more cautiously.
27. **Will the sidewalk on the east side of Bay Street be widened?**
- This study does not recommend widening the sidewalk on the east side of Bay Street. While this is a recognizable 'bottleneck' in the sidewalk network, there is no opportunity to widen this sidewalk without introducing significant traffic impacts, such as the loss of left turns to Front Street from Bay Street northbound.

28. **There is a popular pedestrian (shortcut) walking route through the Royal York Hotel valet parking area on the east side of the hotel. Are there any plans for changing this?** The space between Royal York Hotel and Royal Bank Plaza is privately owned and controlled, and thus not within the City's scope to modify. That said, the City recognizes this informal walking route through the valet parking area is not ideal and has begun a dialogue with the property owners to investigate potential solutions.
29. **How will the City ensure granite pavers do not deteriorate, especially in the roadway and/or from utility work?** Various recent City of Toronto / Waterfront Toronto projects have included many examples of roadway paver design and construction using pavers, including within the Pan Am Athletes Village, Cherry Street and the West Don Lands. As part of these projects the City has developed rigorous principles for paver design, installation and maintenance to ensure long term resilience and upkeep of the pavement treatment. These principle and practices will be applied to Front Street as well.

For further information visit the project website:

**[www.toronto.ca/union\\_station/front](http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/front)**