

## **Park Lawn Road Streetcar Loop Response to Open House Questions**

### **1. Why extend streetcar service from Humber Loop to Park Lawn?**

An environmental assessment (EA) study of upgraded transit service between southern Etobicoke and downtown Toronto was undertaken in 1992-3. As part of that EA study, it was recommended, and approved, that provision be made to develop a reserved streetcar right-of-way on Lake Shore Boulevard beyond Humber Loop with a turn-back loop at Legion Road. This improvement was intended to take place over time as re-development of the motel strip occurred, and would allow the extension of more frequent streetcar service west of Humber Loop as area population increases warranted. At the time of the original EA, limited redevelopment had taken place along the motel strip. Since that time, significant new residential development has occurred, particularly east of Park Lawn Road, more has been approved and additional proposals are expected in view of the recent Ontario Municipal Board ruling for development on Park Lawn. Residents have been requesting an improvement in transit service for some time. The loop at Park Lawn will allow the existing streetcar short-turn at Humber to occur further west, thereby doubling the frequency of service to the Park Lawn area.

In 2002, due to changing land use on Legion Road and identification of environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to Legion Road, the City and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) expressed concern regarding the potential impacts of streetcar operation on the area. Following an analysis and evaluation of options, including consultation with the local area Councillor at the time, expansion of the existing bus loop on the southwest corner of Park Lawn and Lake Shore was selected as the preferred alternative. In 2003, City Council and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority approved in principle the expansion of the existing bus loop to accommodate streetcars subject to review of the detailed design.

Increased traffic demands are evident in the Park Lawn/Lake Shore area, not only due to local development, but also due to development in areas beyond the Toronto borders. As local development occurs, traffic demands will increase and, accordingly, the City has plans to improve road facilities in the area. However, road improvements alone cannot fully serve all of the transportation demand expected from both local and non-local sources. The provision of improved transit service is a basic premise of the Toronto Official Plan, which seeks to promote long-term sustainable growth. By providing improved transit service throughout the City, residents and commuters will have alternatives to the use of the private automobile whose continued unlimited growth is not sustainable.

The Park Lawn loop is only one part of improved transit service between downtown and south Etobicoke. An Environmental Assessment is currently underway to extend the 509 Harbourfront streetcar service west from its existing terminus at Exhibition Place to the existing reserved right-of-way track at Roncesvalles/The Queensway. Also, additional right-of-way property on Lake Shore Boulevard to Park Lawn Road is being acquired as development plans are submitted and reserved streetcar operation will be implemented once all of the required property has been acquired. Once these facilities are completed, service between south Etobicoke and downtown will be provided in a

fully reserved-right-of-way, thereby minimizing the impact of traffic delays on service. In the meantime, installation of the western terminus of this future reserved right-of-way will allow the more frequent streetcar service to be extended, to meet demand from existing and imminent development in the Park Lawn area, in advance of implementation of the new service to downtown in a fully reserved right-of-way.

## **2. Why not extend service to the existing loop at Kipling?**

The TTC continually monitors service demands and adjusts service as necessary. At this time, passenger demand west of the Humber Bay Shores area does not warrant additional service. Extending the existing short-turn service beyond Park Lawn to Kipling is estimated to cost approximately \$3.3 million a year in on-going operating costs, and would require the dedication of three additional streetcars. Use of the TTC's restricted available resources to provide such a service can only be justified if warranted by demand and, at this time, it is not projected that sufficient demand will exist west of Humber Bay Shores to justify this additional cost in the foreseeable future (i.e. for 10 years minimum and most likely more than 20 years). However, the existing, committed, and proposed developments in the Humber Bay Shores area are expected to generate increased ridership and will warrant an improvement in service as far as Park Lawn Road in the short- to medium-term, and this improvement can be made at a much lower operating cost.

Kipling Loop is used for emergency turnbacks only and has not been used by streetcar service on a regular scheduled basis for decades. Single family residential development is located immediately adjacent to the loop. There are no known plans for redevelopment of this area, especially at the scale occurring in the Park Lawn area.

## **3. Why not implement an express bus service between south Etobicoke and downtown now?**

The TTC analysed peak period express bus service between south Etobicoke and downtown in 1999, 2003, 2004 and 2005. In all cases, the analysis indicated that the financial performance of the service would not meet the TTC's minimum financial standard and so, the express bus service was not approved by the Commission. It is intended to update this analysis using newer population and travel information as part of the normal review of service requests for 2007.

However, it should be noted that provision of a peak period, premium fare, limited service express bus is not a replacement for more frequent streetcar service that could be provided to the Park Lawn area. This service can be provided for longer periods of time at lower cost than a special express bus and will serve a greater number of potential transit customers since it is not limited to a single destination or a specific time of day.

#### **4. Won't the added streetcars turning at Park Lawn worsen the already bad traffic congestion?**

Traffic analysis undertaken by consultants, assuming the existing intersection configuration, indicates that the added 6 streetcars per hour turning left at Lake Shore Blvd and Park Lawn Ave. would have minimal impact on the intersection performance assuming development in place up to 2007. An average peak hour increase in delay of 1-3 seconds per vehicle was estimated to occur, with the largest increases being 6 sec for southbound left turning vehicles in the a.m. peak hour and 10 secs. for westbound vehicles in the p.m. peak hour. Improvements will be made to the intersection, including a widening of the southbound approach, when development plans are finalized for the northwest corner of the intersection. In addition, Lake Shore Blvd will be widened east of Park Lawn Road to provide a reserved right-of-way for streetcars in the future. The widening will maintain two through lanes for traffic and appropriate turn lanes in each direction.

During times when the Gardiner Expressway is blocked due to accidents, the traffic congestion in the surrounding area, including Park Lawn and Lake Shore, will worsen as it does today. This type of situation is common anywhere in the city when traffic flow is unexpectedly interrupted. The presence or absence of streetcars at Park Lawn and Lake Shore will make little difference to these exceptional situations.

In fact, the aim of improving transit service to the Park Lawn/Lake Shore area, including to the waterfront park, is to increase the number of people using transit instead of using their cars. Thus, the streetcars should be seen as part of the solution to area traffic problems rather than being identified as contributing to the problem.

#### **5. How will the loop fit into the existing environment of the park?**

The current bus loop was built by the former City of Etobicoke to high standards including landscaping to integrate the loop into the park environment. The expanded loop will be built to the same standards and will be enhanced with increased landscaping and lighting, and an improved entrance to the park as requested by City Parks staff. The degree to which the loop encroaches onto parkland will be minimised, and its location where there is already a transit loop and no adjacent built use further minimises impacts. TTC staff are working closely with the City's Parks staff to develop an acceptable design including a suggested improvement to the park entrance.

In addition, noise studies indicate that predicted noise level increases will be within MOE standards. Improved rail lubrication and trackbed isolation methods will be incorporated in the loop design to minimise any noise impacts.

**6. Will the new loop provide a safer environment than the existing Humber Loop?**

Yes, in that the loop at Park Lawn will be in a more visible area with more people around. The new loop will be designed with upgraded pedestrian-scale lighting. The design will also be reviewed by TTC security staff to ensure that all appropriate safety and security measures are included.

**7. Why not improve the 66 Prince Edward bus service?**

As part of the ongoing network review process, consideration will be given to improving the 66 Prince Edward bus route's operating hours and routing in conjunction with the implementation of the Park Lawn streetcar loop. With the proposed increased development in this area, improved service on the bus route will likely be warranted and TTC will continue to monitor changes to development and potential transit demand to determine when such service improvements should be implemented. However, any improvements to bus service would be in addition to the improvements to streetcar service that would occur with the construction of the Park Lawn streetcar loop. The bus and streetcar routes are not entirely interchangeable, even though both can be used to get to and from downtown. The 501 Queen streetcar offers a greater variety of direct destinations, more frequent service, and longer periods of operation than can be justified on the 66 Prince Edward bus and it, therefore, remains an important and necessary element of transit service to the Park Lawn area.

**8. What action is being taken to improve reliability on the 501 Queen and 508 Lake Shore services to Long Branch?**

The TTC is well aware of the problems in the Queen Street corridor and has been evaluating the situation across the line. Potential solutions, including revised schedules and splitting the route into shorter, more manageable pieces are now being reviewed for implementation. Any changes implemented will be monitored over time to evaluate their effectiveness in improving service reliability.

**9. Why were more options not presented at the November open house?**

As indicated, a full environmental assessment (EA) study of upgraded transit service between southern Etobicoke and downtown Toronto was undertaken in 1993. Commonly referred to as the Waterfront West LRT (WWLRT), this EA study recommended that provision be made to develop a reserved streetcar right-of-way on Lake Shore Boulevard beyond Humber Loop with a turn-back loop at Legion Road. A full public consultation program was undertaken as required by the EA legislation, including two meetings with the Marina del Rey and Grand Harbour residents. The original EA report, which was approved by City Council and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in 1995, included a process for dealing with change from the original approved alignment.

A number of alternative loop locations were considered as part of the EA study including the Park Lawn location. The Legion Road loop was selected based on a potential connection to a relocated GO Station which was being considered at the time. GO Transit now has no plans to complete this relocation.

In 2002, due to the changing land use on Legion Road, the City requested the TTC to find an alternate location for the Legion Road loop. In addition, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) expressed concern that the loop could negatively affect

their proposed Bonar Wetlands project which had been approved immediately north of the loop site. In accordance with the approved EA amendment process, an analysis was undertaken considering three options:

- The original location on Legion Road;
- The west edge of Humber Bay park on the south side of Lake Shore Blvd, just east of Legion Road; and
- The existing bus loop on the southwest corner of Lake Shore/Park Lawn expanded to accommodate the streetcar operation.

The options were evaluated based on benefits to transit customers, operational feasibility, capital costs and community impacts. It was concluded that the best alternative was to modify the existing bus loop in that it was found to be an equal or, in light of the changed land use on Legion Road, a better alternative than the original proposed location. The full TTC report is available at [http://www.ttc.ca/postings/gso-comrpt/documents/report/f1733/\\_conv.htm](http://www.ttc.ca/postings/gso-comrpt/documents/report/f1733/_conv.htm). Discussions on the alternative loop location were held with the City Transportation Planning and Parks staff, TRCA, and with the then local Councillor (Irene Jones), all of whom supported the conclusion.

MOE has confirmed that the relocation of the loop from Legion Road to Park Lawn falls within the definition of a minor modification to the original EA undertaking. The process for addressing such a modification is outlined in Chapter 11 of the original WWLRT EA report. The appropriate excerpts as contained in Section 11.2 are noted below:

*“During the design and construction of the undertaking, modification to some of the project concepts may occur. This could be due to:*

- *Site specific problems which may occur during the design of the project;*
- *Improvements in the design to provide more benefits and/or less adverse impacts;*
- *Circumstances which develop at the time of construction.*

*These are modifications which may result in changes to the program presented in the Environmental Assessment report. However, they would not alter the conclusion that rapid transit in the corridor is required to meet project objectives.*

*Minor modifications to the project will be addressed without requesting formal approval from MOE. Modifications to station concepts and other surface facilities will be subject to liaison with the local municipalities and public agencies. Likewise modifications associated with construction techniques, minor alignment adjustments within existing right-of-way, new Building Code requirements and other adjustments will be governed by specific legislation of the affected agencies. Affected public or agencies will be consulted and advised through the existing approval process. “*

In accordance with this process, affected agencies have been consulted, information has been posted to the City's website, and an Open House was held on November 22, 2006 to consult and advise the local community of the change. A report will be going forward to the Commission in 2007.

**10. What is the process from this point forward?**

Funding for the design and construction of the Park Lawn loop expansion is recommended for inclusion in the proposed 2007-2011 TTC budget. If you wish to provide additional comment on this project and/or other TTC issues you may contact your City Councillor and/or the Commission.

Commission meeting agendas and schedules are available at: <http://www.ttc.ca/postings/gso-comrpt>. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 31st.

Meetings commence at 1:00 p.m. and are held in Committee Room 2, 2nd Floor, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto.

To confirm meeting agendas, you may contact the Office of the General Secretary: 416-393-3698.

**11. When is construction of the loop scheduled?**

Construction of the loop is scheduled for spring/summer of 2009.

**12. With a new Park Lawn Loop, what will the increase in streetcar service be during non-peak hours?**

Service will double between Humber Loop and Park Lawn. The same frequency of service that is now scheduled as far west as Humber Loop, will be extended further west to Park Lawn.

TTC will add an average of 6 streetcars per hour most of the day to the existing service west of Humber Loop to Park Lawn Loop. The existing 501 Queen service west of Humber Loop is 5-6 streetcars per hour in the peaks and midday periods, Monday to Friday, for an average frequency of a streetcar every 10 minutes. The new service will add the same number of streetcars per hour for a total of 10-12 streetcars per hour, or an average frequency of a streetcar every 5 minutes during the peaks and midday periods.

During the weekday evenings, the existing frequency of a streetcar every 16 or 20 minutes (3-4 streetcars per hour) will change to every 8 or 10 minutes (6-8 streetcars per hour). Weekend service will also double and frequencies vary depending on the time of day.

**13. Can TTC build the streetcar loop at Superior Avenue south of Lake Shore Boulevard instead of Park Lawn?**

Based on currently-known development scenarios, ridership projections indicate that there will not be sufficient demand to build a loop and provide service west of the Humber Bay Shores (Park Lawn) area in the foreseeable future (i.e. for 10 years minimum and most likely more than 20 years).