



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Waterfront West Streetcar Transit Environmental Assessment – Terms of Reference

Date:	January 24, 2007
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 14 - Parkdale - High Park Ward 19 – Trinity - Spadina
Reference Number:	File No. pg070004

SUMMARY

To endorse submission of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Waterfront West Streetcar Environmental Assessment to the Minister of the Environment consistent with the report and attachments that will be dealt with by the Toronto Transit Commission at their meeting of January 31, 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the Toronto Transit Commission's submission of the Terms of Reference for the Waterfront West Streetcar Environmental Assessment to the Minister of the Environment for approval in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act.

Financial Impact

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

By way of background, the 1993 Waterfront West LRT Environmental Assessment (WWLRT EA) study was undertaken to extend reserved right of way streetcar service from the Harbourfront area west, and to consider connections to the existing trackage on The Queensway and to southern Etobicoke. As a result of that study the Harbourfront line has been extended in phases, as far as Exhibition Place.

At its meeting on July 20, 21 and 22, 2004, City Council adopted Clause No. 14 contained in Policy and Finance Committee Report 6 entitled “Transit First Investments in Toronto’s Waterfront” and in doing so requested, among other things, that the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation, in co-operation with the Toronto Transit Commission and the City of Toronto, immediately initiate an environmental assessment study for the Harbourfront LRT, to extend service to Dufferin Street.

Following Council’s decision, and in response to requests received from the local area Councillors, the Toronto Transit Commission at their meeting of September 21, 2005, approved funds in their 2006 Budget for an environmental assessment study of this extension to Roncesvalles Avenue, following which the Commission, at their meeting of June 21, 2006, further authorised the retaining of Lea Consultants to undertake this work.

The current study, now referred to as the Waterfront West Streetcar extension, is divided into three parts as follows:

- 1) A minor modification to the original EA to address the expansion of the Park Lawn bus loop in Etobicoke to accommodate streetcar operation.
- 2) A major modification to the original EA to address the extension of the streetcar line from the current Exhibition Place streetcar loop to Dufferin Street.
- 3) An Individual Environmental Assessment to address the extension of the streetcar line from Dufferin Street to Roncesvalles Avenue.

As noted in the Commission report, the portion of the line from Dufferin to Roncesvalles requires an individual EA since, although studied, it was not included in the WWLRT EA undertaking approved by the MOE in 1995.

COMMENTS

Provincial Minister of the Environment (MOE) approval for the construction of transit facilities such as those proposed for the waterfront requires individual environmental assessment studies. These studies take approximately two years to complete from the start of the “Terms of Reference” stage to final approval by MOE, and involve an extensive public participation component.

The first step in an individual environmental assessment process is the preparation of a “Terms of Reference” for the environmental assessment study. This work has now been completed, as described below and in the Terms of Reference document attached to the TTC staff report.

The Terms of Reference document describes the process for conducting the EA study. The purpose of the study is:

To help overcome the existing and projected future deficiencies in the Study Area transportation system and also support the City of Toronto’s Official

Plan vision to provide a high quality transit system that allows people to move around the city quickly and conveniently.

In developing the Terms of Reference (ToR) two public information centre meetings were held on November 27 and 28, 2006, each of which was attended by approximately 60 people. In addition, an open house was held at City Hall for Councillors to review the study material. As detailed in the ToR Public Consultation Record, the public generally endorsed the Terms of Reference and expressed support for the project to proceed as soon as possible.

To fulfil Council's direction regarding a "transit first" approach to development in the area, work must proceed immediately on the approval, design, and construction of transit facilities to serve this area.

The study will assess planning and design alternatives to achieve this objective and compare these to a "do nothing" option. The studies will also determine environmental impacts of the options assessed, along with the identification of mitigating measures for any adverse environmental impacts of preferred alternatives. An integral part of the study will be a consultation program during the course of the initiative, including public workshops at key milestones.

Conclusions

Significant redevelopment is taking place in western Toronto and improved transportation facilities are a major element in supporting an increased population within the City. The "transit first" approach of having a high quality transit service in place to encourage a high level of transit use when new developments in an area are being occupied, is strongly supported by the Commission and the City.

TTC and City staff are seeking the approval of the Toronto Transit Commission and City Council respectively, to submit the Terms of Reference for the Waterfront West Streetcar Extension Environmental Assessments to the MOE. Under the Ontario EA Act, the Ministry is required to complete their review within 13 weeks of receipt of the document.

Following MOE approval of the Terms of Reference, the individual EA study will proceed. This study and the associated public consultation process is expected to take approximately one year to complete. This will be followed by an MOE review period of 30 weeks. EA approval is expected to be obtained early in 2008.

The Waterfront Secretariat and Transportation Services Division have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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