

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: July 11, 2007

SUBJECT: OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AT FINCH STATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Receive this report, noting that:
 - City staff have agreed to install a traffic signal on Finch Avenue East at Finch Station, which will significantly reduce the delays now experienced by buses on the 39 FINCH EAST route that turn left onto Finch Avenue East when exiting the station;
 - The new signal will cost the TTC approximately \$190,000 in addition to the ongoing annual maintenance costs of approximately \$5000;
 - The new signal is far more costly than the previous recommendation to revise the operation of the 39 FINCH EAST route via Bishop Avenue and Kenneth Avenue to access Finch Avenue East, but it addresses the community concerns over bus operations near residential condominium buildings; and
2. Forward this report to Councillor David Shiner, the City of Toronto Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, and to the General Manager – Transportation Services.

FUNDING

There are sufficient funds available in the Capital Project 9.2, Transit Priorities, to accommodate the \$190,000 required for this traffic signal installation. The \$5,000 in annual maintenance costs will be added to the Operating Budget, under the Transit Priority Maintenance program.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on October 25, 2006, the Commission considered a report entitled, **39 Finch East – Revised Routing Proposal** in which staff recommended altering the routing of the 39 FINCH EAST bus service at Finch Station so that exiting buses would no longer be required to make the very difficult unsignalized left-turn onto Finch Avenue East. It was recommended that the route be altered so that buses would instead exit at the north end of the station, onto Bishop Avenue, and operate east on Bishop Avenue, and south on Kenneth Avenue to Finch Avenue East, and then make the left-turn at the traffic signals at the Finch/Kenneth intersection.

The Commission approved a ten-week public consultation process to allow for community consultation and public meetings. Councillor Shiner arranged for two community meetings on this matter. This report summarises the results of those community meetings, and the decision to install a new traffic signal on Finch Avenue at Finch Station, which would allow the bus routing to remain unchanged.

DISCUSSION

The first of the two community meetings, on February 15, 2007, was attended by approximately 50 people, most of whom were residents of the condominiums on Bishop Avenue and Kenneth Avenue. These people were opposed to the recommended re-routing of the 39 FINCH EAST buses onto the roadways fronting their buildings. Some of the concerns cited were pedestrian safety, increased pollution, and increased difficulty for automobiles exiting the condominium driveways.

At that meeting, TTC and City staff explained the significant problems experienced by 39 FINCH EAST buses trying to making the left-turn out of the station, directly onto Finch Avenue East, across two lanes of often-heavy westbound traffic, without a traffic signal. They advised that the option of a traffic signal at this location had been considered several times in the past, but had been rejected because it would place a new signal very close to the existing traffic signals at Yonge Street. Those attending the meeting raised a number of concerns, such as the level of traffic congestion on Bishop and Kenneth Avenues and the extent of delays to motorists trying to exit the condominium driveways. Councillor Shiner asked that a second public meeting be scheduled at which staff could provide additional information on these issues. He also requested that City staff give further thought to how a traffic signal might be made to work on Finch Avenue East at the exit from Finch Station so that this re-routing would not be necessary.

Subsequent to that meeting, City staff advised Councillor Shiner that they had further reviewed the option of a traffic signal at Finch Station and that while, technically, there may be a way to allow signals to be installed at this location, the operating strategy of the new signal would be significantly constrained given the very close proximity to Yonge Street. Their initial proposal – that a new signal operate with exactly the same timings as those at the signals at the Yonge/Finch intersection – was not acceptable to TTC because, while it would have resulted in a very long southbound green phase for 39 FINCH EAST buses exiting the station, there would have been an offsetting very significant increase in delay for westbound buses on Finch Avenue approaching the station.

Staff attended a second public meeting on March 28, 2007, which was attended by about 70 people. Staff provided an update to the public on the questions which had been raised at the previous meeting, including levels of traffic congestion, collisions in past years, and delays to motorists exiting their condominiums onto Bishop and Kenneth Avenues. City staff advised that they were still working on the potential alternative of a traffic signal on Finch Avenue at the station exit and that, if an acceptable operating strategy could be developed, they would recommend installation of traffic control signals which would make it unnecessary to re-route the 39 FINCH EAST bus route via Bishop and Kenneth Avenues.

Subsequent to that second meeting, City and TTC staff developed an alternate signal operating strategy that would provide TTC buses with similar benefits to the recommended re-routing while

still maintaining the necessary level of synchronization with the signals at Yonge Street. This proposed signal operating strategy required that the City's signal contractor conduct extensive testing to ensure that it could be accommodated by the traffic signal control equipment. This testing has now been completed and Transportation Services staff have agreed to install this new signal, with this alternate signal operating strategy, providing that TTC pays for the installation of the signal – estimated to cost \$190,000 – and the associated ongoing maintenance costs, which are approximately \$5,000 annually.

While the option of a traffic signal installation at Finch Avenue is much more costly than the alternative of simply re-routing the exiting buses via Bishop and Kenneth Avenues, the new traffic signal is an acceptable solution to the problems now experienced by buses turning left from the station to travel east on Finch Avenue.

The new traffic signal would operate more efficiently if a separate left-turn lane were provided for exiting buses within the station driveway. In order to provide this lane in a location that minimises the risk of a waiting bus blocking the path of other buses that are circulating within the station, the left-turn lane must be located as far east as possible and, to do this, the wall on the east side of the terminal must be moved further east, to the property line. By removing the existing wall, which has been constructed with a "waved" design, and reconstructing it with a more-standard linear design immediately adjacent to the property line, the bus circulation roadway on the east side of the terminal would be widened by about 1.5 metres.

The widening resulting from the relocation of the wall would also alleviate congestion in the north-east area of the terminal. In the peak periods, when the bus loading areas are occupied, if any buses are laying over against the east wall, the width of the remaining lane is very narrow for circulating buses, thus slowing down and constraining the movement of buses. Staff will be recommending inclusion of funds for the relocation of this wall within the 2008-2012 Capital Budget.

JUSTIFICATION

Installation of traffic control signals at the Finch Station exit onto Finch Avenue East would alleviate the significant peak-period delays typically experienced by buses attempting to turn left out of the station and onto Finch Avenue East.

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