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January 26, 2007

Ms. Ulli Watkiss
City Clerk
City of Toronto
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N2

Attention: Ms. Christine Archibald

Dear Ms. Watkiss:

Re: August 17, 2006 City Staff Report to Toronto and East York Community Council:
Dundas Street West, between Dovercourt Road and Sterling Road – Proposed
Amendments to Parking Regulations

The Toronto and East York Community Council deferred consideration of the subject report pending receipt of TTC staff comments on this issue. Would you please ensure that the following comments are provided to the Community Council members when this matter is considered at their meeting on February 13, 2007.

For the reasons explained below, we recommend that Community Council not approve the request to allow parking on Dundas Street West, between Dovercourt Road and Sterling Road, westbound in the morning peak period and eastbound in the afternoon peak period. Our reasons for this recommendation follow.

TTC staff have consistently opposed any relaxation of the peak-period parking restrictions on four-lane roads with streetcar operation, because parked cars create added congestion that, in turn, has a negative impact on transit customers. The 505 DUNDAS streetcar route operates at an approximate 5-minute frequency in the morning and afternoon peak periods. It is one of the busiest TTC routes, carrying 36,000 riders on a typical weekday. As with our other streetcar routes, 505 DUNDAS is already subject to large fluctuations in travel time because of the left-turning traffic, legal and illegal parking, and other traffic related delays on the street. Consequently, the average operating speed of the route is less than 12 kilometres per hour in the peak periods, even though we have implemented signal priority for streetcars to reduce the amount of delay due to red traffic signals.

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Although the proposal is to allow parking only in the "off-peak" direction, the resulting added congestion would create extra delay for streetcars travelling in that direction, and in the peak direction as well.

Additional Delays to Streetcars in the Off-peak Direction:

Streetcars and other traffic travelling in the off-peak direction would be subject to extra delay at the start of the "bottleneck" where parking is permitted and the two traffic lanes available to traffic are reduced to one. Off-peak direction traffic volumes in this single lane would be very high, particularly in the afternoon peak period when, based on the City staff report on the matter, the average traffic volumes in the off-peak direction is almost 75% of the volume in the peak direction. This congestion in the single traffic lane would be significant when the lane was blocked by a motorist trying to parallel park or waiting to make a left turn.

Additional Delays to Streetcars in the Peak Direction:

Streetcars travelling in the peak direction would also be subject to additional delay. Motorists travelling in the peak direction that stop on the tracks and wait for a gap in opposing traffic to make a left turn already create delays for following streetcars. If traffic in the off-peak direction were restricted to a single lane, there would be fewer gaps available in that traffic for these left-turning motorists to make their turn. Hence, these left-turning motorists would be sitting on the tracks longer and creating additional delays to streetcars in the peak direction.

In both directions, these delays would be variable, and this contributes to greater bunching of streetcars, and more frequent short-turns.

The Cumulative Effect of Delays Over the Whole Length of a Route :

The "instability" that has become characteristic of many of the TTC's streetcar routes that operate in mixed traffic is not the result of any single delay; it results from the cumulative effect of many random delays over the entire length of the route.

It is essential to protect streetcar routes from additional delays because they are typically the TTC's most heavily used routes, and owing to their fixed rail operation in mixed traffic, are the most vulnerable to disruptions of scheduled service of all the surface transit routes operated by TTC. The combination of very frequent service, and the constant, highly variable and unpredictable traffic-related delays characteristic of the central areas in which streetcars operate, cause gapping, bunching, overcrowding, and extensive short-turning on these routes.



Conclusion:

TTC and City staff are continually trying to find ways to reduce the random and variable delays that result in slower and less reliable streetcar service. In fact, the City's Official Plan indicates that, "limiting or removing on-street parking during part or all of the day is one of the possible strategies to improve transit operations". We believe that providing additional parking on this roadway during peak periods, at the expense of public transit operations, is contrary to the spirit and intent of the Official Plan and should not be approved.

Sincerely,



Gary Webster
Interim Chief General Manager

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