



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Sidewalk Construction - Ernest Avenue

Date:	October 28, 2008
To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Transportation Services Toronto and East York District
Wards:	Davenport, Ward 18
Reference Number:	Ts08180te.top.doc

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter which the Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

Transportation Services has evaluated several options, at the request of Councillor Adam Giambrone, to provide a proper pedestrian link using Ernest Avenue between new cycling and walking facilities in the rail corridor forming the west boundary of Ward 18, and abutting residential neighbourhoods. These involve narrowing the pavement to varying degrees to provide a sidewalk on one or both sides.

Staff are of the view, when taking into account the current light industrial uses along this section of Ernest Avenue and accompanying truck activity, that installation of a 1.7-metre wide sidewalk on the south side of Ernest Avenue will enhance safety for pedestrians and provide a link from Perth Avenue to the proposed bicycle path and pedestrian footpath along the railway corridor at the westerly end of Ernest Avenue. However, some further widening of the sidewalk into the unimproved road allowance might be feasible. This will be determined during the detailed design process. In considering this undertaking it is necessary to remove a modular traffic island, immediately west of Perth Avenue, and prohibit parking at all times on the north side of Ernest Avenue to maintain two-way traffic flow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Services recommends that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. approve the alterations on Ernest Avenue, from Perth Avenue to the west end, generally as shown in Option 1 (Drawing No. 421F-9212 attached) to narrow the pavement and provide a sidewalk on the south side; and

2. upon narrowing Ernest Avenue and installation of a sidewalk:
 - a. prohibit parking at all times on the north side of Ernest Avenue, from Perth Avenue to the west end of the street; and
 - b. rescind the “No Stopping Anytime” regulation on the north and south sides of Ernest Avenue, from Perth Avenue to a point 42 metres west.

Financial Impact

The Transportation Services Division 2008 Capital Budget includes funding in the amount of \$2 million dollars for new sidewalk construction. These funds have been allocated to previously approved projects. If Community Council approves narrowing the pavement width of Ernest Avenue, from Perth Avenue to the west end of the street to install a sidewalk as recommended above, the estimated cost is about \$100,000.00. The Transportation Services Division has allocated \$2 million dollars for new sidewalk construction in its 2009 Capital Budget request. Installation of a sidewalk on Ernest Avenue is subject to funding availability and scheduling under the Capital Works program.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The provision of bicycle and pedestrian trail facilities in the rail corridor which forms the west boundary of Ward 18 has given rise to an increased interest and need to develop more suitable pedestrian links and amenity from the abutting neighbourhoods. Councillor Adam Giambrone requested Transportation Services to evaluate means for providing such a link on Ernest Avenue, which runs westerly from Perth Avenue and dead-ends at the rail corridor. Several options were assessed, involving narrowing the pavement on Ernest Avenue to varying degrees to provide a sidewalk on either one or both sides. Considerations associated with each are discussed as follows.

COMMENTS

Characteristics of Ernest Avenue

Ernest Avenue, between Perth Avenue and the west end of the street is a local road with a speed limit of 40 km/h and a pavement width of about 9.8 metres. There are no sidewalks along either side of Ernest Avenue, west of Perth Avenue. A median traffic island was installed about 15 metres west of Perth Avenue in 2007 to discourage trucks from backing down the roadway.

Stopping is prohibited at all times on both sides of Ernest Avenue, from Perth Avenue to a point 42 metres west. Parking is prohibited, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, and from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Saturdays elsewhere on the north side of Ernest Avenue. Parking is otherwise allowed on both sides of Ernest Avenue. Permit parking regulations apply from 12:01 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. daily on both sides of the street. Ernest Avenue is located in Permit Parking Area 1A. A total of 937 parking spaces are authorized in this area for which 556 permits have currently been issued.

Properties along the section of Ernest Avenue, west of Perth Avenue are predominantly light industrial businesses, characteristic of several streets in the area that abut, and at one time were serviced, by railway lines.

Operational Issue

Considerable trucking activity generated by a business proprietor at the west end of Ernest Avenue frequently results in several large trucks queuing on the street, impeding traffic movement, and creating a potential safety hazard for pedestrians and cyclists. The actions of several truck drivers and the impact of these large trucks on the adjacent residential streets, particularly Perth Avenue, has been a source of complaints from area residents for several years. Installation of the walking/cycling trail along the railway corridor at the west end of Ernest Avenue will increase pedestrian and cycling activity along Ernest Avenue, increase conflict between trucks, pedestrians/cyclists, and introduce safety concerns for all road users.

Assessment of Alternatives

Staff have considered a number of possible options to address the need for a better pedestrian environment on Ernest Avenue. Providing a sidewalk from Perth Avenue to the west end of the street will improve safety for pedestrians. This will require narrowing the current pavement width. Accessibility guidelines recommend a minimum sidewalk width of 2 metres when a sidewalk is against the curb. A narrower width of 1.7 metres can be considered for sidewalks set back from the curb. However, due to physical constraints, many sidewalks along local streets in the central area of the City are less than 2 metres in width.

The initial option involved narrowing the south side of the road by 1.7 metres thereby reducing the width of Ernest Avenue to 8.1 metres. Upon further discussion with Councillor Giambrone, options of narrowing Ernest Avenue by a total of 3 metres, to 6.8 metres in width were assessed. This would accommodate either 1.5 metre wide sidewalks on both sides, or a sidewalk and boulevard with possible tree planting on the south side.

Option 1

Narrowing the south side of Ernest Avenue by 1.7 metres, shown on Drawing No. 421F-9212, dated February 2008:

- Provides a sidewalk, 1.7 metres in width along the south side of the street to enhance pedestrian safety;
- Appropriate drainage can be maintained with a minimum of additional road reconstruction (possibly milling and repaving only);
- Parking is maintained on the south side of the street to act as a buffer between passing vehicles and pedestrians;
- Requires removal of the median island installed in 2007;

- Requires prohibiting parking at all times on the north side of the street; and
- Estimated cost is approximately \$100,000.00.

Analysis

This option provides a sidewalk of less than the 2 metres preferred width but similar in width to those found along many local streets. A pavement width of about 8.1 metres is maintained, which can accommodate truck traffic generated by the businesses along Ernest Avenue. Narrowing the roadway to 8.1 metres brings cyclists into closer proximity with other vehicles, but creates the same general separation experienced on most local roads in the central area of the City. Conflict between cyclists and other traffic is a greater concern if the median island is maintained near Perth Avenue. Complete removal of the median island is recommended.

Very little parking occurs on this street during the daytime hours. However, Ernest Avenue is a permit parking street and there will be a loss of 6 parking spaces on the north side of the street and in Permit Parking Area 1A.

Option 2

Narrowing the south side of Ernest Avenue by 3 metres, shown on Drawing No. 421F-9467, dated October 2008:

- Enables construction of a 2-metre wide sidewalk and 1-metre wide boulevard to serve as a buffer zone between passing vehicles and pedestrians;
- Might allow for in-ground planting of trees in a south side boulevard, although a soft-surface boulevard would be highly susceptible to on-going damage from truck activity;
- The resulting pavement width of 6.8 metres is narrow for the industrial character of the street and the trucking activity generated and would bring cyclists into closer proximity to other traffic;
- Traffic congestion on the roadway could obstruct access by emergency vehicles;
- Requires prohibiting parking at all times on both sides of the street;
- The median island near Perth Avenue cannot be retained;
- The turning radii for trucks entering and leaving loading facilities at various locations along the street will require large trucks to mount the opposite curb to complete their turn;
- Appropriate drainage cannot be maintained with a minimum of additional road reconstruction. Milling and repaving is less likely to suffice; and

- Estimated cost is approximately \$220,000.00.

Analysis

Narrowing the pavement width by 3 metres will enable construction of a sidewalk and boulevard on the south side to act as a buffer area between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Further consultation with Urban Forestry staff is required to determine if in-ground planting of trees could be accommodated along a south-side boulevard. The 6.8-metre pavement width is not desirable for the amount of truck traffic occurring on this street. Cyclists are placed in close proximity with other vehicles along the entire length of the street. Service docks along the north side of Ernest Avenue, near the west end of the street, require trucks to load/unload perpendicular to the north curb. Large trucks will extend into the travelled portion of the roadway, in some instances obstructing passage along the street by other vehicles. Staff has requested comments from the Toronto Fire Service respecting this option but have not received a response to date.

The narrow width of the street requires that parking be prohibited at all times on both sides of the street. This will result in a loss of 22 parking spaces on Ernest Avenue and in Permit Parking Area 1A.

Option 3

Narrowing both sides of Ernest Avenue by 1.5 metres, shown on Drawing No. 421F-9468, dated October 2008:

- Enables construction of a narrow sidewalk along both sides of the street;
- Appropriate drainage might be maintained with a minimum of additional road reconstruction (possibly milling and repaving only);
- Although a 1.5-metre sidewalk could be constructed along both sides of the street, the width of each sidewalk would be less than the recommended minimum;
- The resulting pavement width of 6.8 metres is narrow for the industrial character of the street and the trucking activity generated and would bring cyclists into closer proximity to other traffic;
- Traffic congestion on the roadway could obstruct access by emergency vehicles;
- Requires prohibiting parking at all times on both sides of the street;
- The median island near Perth Avenue cannot be retained;
- The turning radii for trucks entering and leaving loading facilities at various locations along the street will require large trucks to mount the opposite curb to complete their turn;
- A sidewalk on the north side of the street will be frequently obstructed by trucks servicing loading docks near the west end of the street; and

- Estimated cost is approximately \$160,000.00.

Analysis

Narrowing the pavement width by 3 metres will enable construction of a sidewalk, 1.5 metres in width, along both the north and south sides of the street. As with Option 2, the 6.8-metre pavement width is not desirable for the amount of truck traffic occurring on this street. Cyclists are placed in close proximity with other vehicles along the entire length of the street. Vehicles using the service docks along the north side of Ernest Avenue, near the west end of the street, will obstruct the sidewalk on a frequent basis forcing pedestrians onto the roadway. The narrower sidewalk on the south side of the street provides a less comfortable environment for pedestrians than either Option 1 or 2.

The narrow width of the street requires that parking be prohibited at all times on both sides of the street resulting in the loss of 22 parking spaces on Ernest Avenue and in Permit Parking Area 1A.

Resolution

Enhancing safety for pedestrians and cyclists is a priority. In the face of the significant trucking activity that takes place on Ernest Avenue, providing a sidewalk along the south side of the street will greatly improve safety for pedestrians and provide a link from Perth Avenue to the future pedestrian and cycling trail along the railway corridor. At the same time, providing a sidewalk along Ernest Avenue requires narrowing the existing road width, which brings cyclists in closer proximity to other traffic.

In weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the three options, the impact on all road users and the overall operational safety of the street are the key considerations.

Option 2, provides the safest environment for pedestrians. However, the narrow width of the street creates safety concerns for all vehicular traffic, including cyclists, and could hinder access to the street by fire trucks or ambulances in the event of an emergency. The loss of all parking might inconvenience area residents and their visitors, creating greater competition for parking space on Perth Avenue.

While Option 3, provides a sidewalk along both sides of the street, the combination of a narrow road width coupled with substandard width sidewalks provides the least desirable environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. The disadvantages related to Option 2 also apply in this situation.

Option 1, represents a solution that takes into consideration all road users. The provision of a sidewalk, 1.7 metres in width, will improve safety for pedestrians, maintains a reasonably safe environment for cyclists similar to what they experience on many local streets in the central area of the City, and maintains a road width that can accommodate the type of trucking activity currently generated by businesses along the street.

Regardless of which Option is selected, it is possible that a section of the unimproved road allowance along the south side of the street, back of the existing curb, might be suitable for further widening of the sidewalk, installation of a boulevard, planting features, or combination of these elements. This will be clearly determined once detailed design work is undertaken.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Drawing No. 421F-9212, dated February 2008
- (2) Drawing No. 421F-9467, dated October 2008
- (3) Drawing No. 421F-9468, dated October 2008

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