

January 26, 2009

Mayor Miller and Toronto City Councillors
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Miller and Toronto City Councillors,

Re: Traffic Control Signal Study - St. Clair Avenue East at Jeanette Street and on Pharmacy Avenue at Arnall Avenue

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, at its meeting on January 6, 2009, requested that the TTC submit comments on Item PW21.5 entitled "Traffic Control Signal Study – Pharmacy Avenue and Arnall Avenue". We understand that City staff have advised that there is not sufficient justification for traffic signals at these two locations, however, the Committee is recommending to Council that these signals be installed.

Our comments follow. Please note our specific request that Council not approve the installation of a traffic signal on St. Clair Avenue East at Jeanette Street without first requesting further study; if it is decided that a signal is to be installed in this vicinity, Waltonice Road - the first street east of Jeanette Street - would be a better location for a new signal, from a TTC perspective.

By way of general comment, traffic control signals, where justified and well-designed, are necessary for the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles on the city's road system. At the same time, too many traffic signals, particularly on arterial roads, can significantly degrade traffic and transit operations. The decision as to when new signals are "justified" is, ultimately, the responsibility of City Council. City Transportation staff are required to evaluate requests for new signals so as to reflect the wishes of Council, in a consistent manner, throughout the city.

City staff make use of technical traffic signal warrants as well as engineering judgement when determining whether new signals are recommended. Engineering judgement is essential. For example, even if the technical warrants are not satisfied on a busy arterial roadway, if there is a pattern of pedestrians attempting to cross the road at an unsignalized location where there are not a sufficient number of gaps in the two-way traffic flow to enable them to do so safely, a signal may still be appropriate or, alternatively, some other form of crossing assistance, such as a pedestrian refuge island in the middle of the road. Similarly, in the dense urban environment of downtown Toronto with more-narrow roads and slower traffic, there are locations where the number of midblock pedestrian crossings satisfy the technical warrants for a new signal, but where a new signal would not be recommended because it would then be far too close to an adjacent, existing traffic signal.

It is not the TTC's role to evaluate whether signals are justified at the two intersections in

question, but we do believe it is important that there be consistency in decision making. If the process used by City staff to evaluate where new signals should be installed is not representing the wishes of Council, it would seem to be appropriate that they be asked to revisit that process. In this regard, if Council does approve of signals at these locations then, in the interest of consistency, it would be appropriate that City staff be provided with the rationale for this decision, so that this can be reflected in future evaluations, at locations elsewhere in the City with similar conditions.

With respect to transit considerations at the locations being considered by Council, Pharmacy Avenue is served by the 167 PHARMACY NORTH bus route that operates at a frequency of 24 minutes in the AM and PM peak-periods and 30 minutes during the day. Given these service levels, if a decision is made to install traffic signals at Arnall Avenue, the additional delay resulting from this new signal would affect a relatively low number of transit customers.

St. Clair Avenue East, in the vicinity of Jeanette Street, is served by the 102 MARKHAM ROAD and 9 BELLAMY bus routes that operate at a combined frequency of 3'24" in the AM peak, 5'32" during the day and 3'45" during the PM peak. There are bus stops on St. Clair Avenue in both directions at Jeannette Street and Andrew Avenue, which is two intersections to the east of Jeanette Street. If it is decided to install a new signal in this vicinity, then from a transit operations perspective, it would be preferred if the new signal were placed at Wilsonice Avenue, which is midway between Jeannette Street and Andrew Avenue. This would allow us to consolidate our two sets of bus stops into a single location at Wilsonice Avenue.

I trust these comments will be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Gary Webster
Chief General Manager

11-31-78

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