



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Downtown Transportation Operations Study – Terms of Reference

Date:	August 30, 2011
To:	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
From:	General Manager, Transportation Services
Wards:	Trinity-Spadina, Ward 20; Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Wards 27 and 28
Reference Number:	P:\2011\Cluster B\TRA\Toronto and East York District\TOP PW201185te.top

SUMMARY

This report outlines the Terms of Reference and seeks approval from City Council to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to undertake a comprehensive traffic management study in the area bounded by: Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street, to the south; Queen Street East/West, to the north; Jarvis Street, to the east; and Bathurst Street, to the west, hereafter referred to in this report as the Downtown Transportation Operations Study Area.

The Downtown Transportation Operations Study itself is intended to address congestion concerns in the context of the current downtown environment and provide a framework for a cohesive assessment of the many transportation options that are already at various stages of development. It will focus on operational solutions to accommodate safe, efficient movement of people and goods within the downtown area with a specific emphasis on measures for shorter term implementation that will optimize the use and capacity of the existing infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Transportation Services to develop and issue a Request For Proposals along the parameters set out in this report for consulting services to undertake a Downtown Transportation Operations Study in the area bounded by: Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street, to the south; Queen Street East/West, to the north; Jarvis Street, to the east; and Bathurst Street, to the west.

2. City Council request the General Manager, Transportation Services to report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, as applicable during the course of the study, on measures that can be implemented and have been identified as part of the Downtown Transportation Operations Study as short term enhancements that will optimize the use and capacity of the existing infrastructure.

Financial Impact

The scope of this study will require retention of professional consulting services. The actual cost of undertaking this study is unknown pending the submission of proposals and quotations for services. Transportation Services is estimating that the cost of the study will be in order of \$375,000.00, for which funds are available in the 2011 Transportation Services Engineering Studies budget.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council, at its meeting of July 12, 13 and 14, 2011, in considering Item PW5.1 – "Bikeway Network, 2011 Update", among other things, directed staff to report to the September 2011 meeting of PW&I on a Terms of Reference for an overall transportation operations study in the downtown area.

COMMENTS

Transportation Vision

The proposed transportation operations study will be conducted in the context of a continually evolving vision for transportation in the GTA region, the City, and the downtown core area as captured in the Official Plan. It is fitting and imperative that the Official Plan defines direction for the transportation system's integral role in shaping and supporting urban development, and thus influencing travel mode. Land use and transportation are inexorably linked. The Official Plan clearly emphasizes a multi-modal approach with emphasis on transit and active modes and establishes the practical limitations of providing any substantive new road infrastructure capacity into the core.

There is an ongoing, inevitable tension created as intense residential and commercial development brings tens of thousands of new residents, workers and visitors to areas that historically saw very little of this activity and served as relatively unimpeded, high capacity road transportation corridors. The momentum of this transition drives changes to the ways and means that people navigate through and use the public street network. Virtually all downtown routes and areas now grapple with the balance of being both a destination and a traffic corridor.

Study Area

The suggested primary area of focus for the Downtown Transportation Operations Study is bounded by Lake Shore Boulevard/Harbour Street, Bathurst Street, Queen Street East/West and Jarvis Street. These are not seen as hard boundaries, as review of certain initiatives or opportunities for example, may see the need for examination of corridors or specific initiatives beyond the main area. At the same time the study cannot expand in area or scope to an extent that it becomes unmanageable.

Current Downtown Initiatives/Issues Affecting Transportation Operations

Over the past few years there have been a large number of development projects proposed/approved as well as infrastructure-related proposals suggested/approved that will alter the operational and use patterns and standards of downtown streets. These proposals include, but are not limited to the:

- F. G. Gardiner Expressway EA and Gardiner ramp EA
- John Street Revitalization Project;
- Union Station/Front Street Transformation Project;
- Separated bike lane plan;
- Bixi Bicycle Program
- Richmond Street West/Adelaide Street West two-way traffic operation proposal;
- Simcoe Street, two-way traffic operation (result of opening the railway underpass);
- Wellington Street West traffic operation (in light of recent major developments);
- One-way operation alternatives;
- Lake Shore Boulevard urbanization with adjacent new development;
- Queens Quay Waterfront Toronto proposal;
- New pilot regulations on courier, delivery vehicle, and car-share parking spaces;
- Yonge Street Promenade proposal; and
- Signal Coordination evaluation of University Avenue

Many of these projects are at various stages of review and in some cases, will be the subject of independent reports to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee. Each of these projects has operational significance and benefit to the City. Individually, the implications of a proposal on traffic operation might be manageable within current traffic operational parameters in the downtown area but collectively, they will have a more significant impact on travel patterns and traffic congestion in the downtown area.

Implications of Congestion

Over the past three decades, two trends in accommodating increased travel growth in and to downtown Toronto have dominated:

- The successful encouragement of vibrant and extensive residential population growth downtown has substantially mitigated auto and mass transit demand; and

- Virtually all of the substantial growth in travel demand has been facilitated by GO Transit.

Despite this, auto demand and resultant congestion in the region and City continue unabated. The negative implications of congestion have been cited in many studies, from the cost to economic activity (estimated in one Provincial study at \$2.2 billion annually in the GTA), significant increases in commuting times (now estimated around 80 minutes daily), and impacts to the environment.

The Study - Parameters and Objectives

In developing the parameters for the study, two overarching aspects are under consideration:

- Travelling in/around downtown
- Getting into/out of downtown.

While getting into and out of the downtown would not be the primary focus, it must be recognized and accepted that some roads play a major role in accommodating this function while others are important to a somewhat lesser extent. This is influenced by connections to the expressway network (ramps/access to the F. G. Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway), and the capacity/continuity of the route. Key north-south links would arguably be, University Avenue, Jarvis Street and Bayview Avenue. Other arterials such as Bathurst Street, Bay Street, Yonge Street and Sherbourne Street have a lesser but nonetheless important role in this regard. Similarly, key east-west links are comprised of Lake Shore Boulevard, Richmond Street and Adelaide Street, while others like Queens Quay, Wellington Street, Front Street, King Street, Queen Street and College Street play a more significant role in the public transit network and/or provide circulatory or local access.

The objective of the Downtown Transportation Operations Study is to address congestion concerns in the context of the current downtown environment and provide a framework for a cohesive assessment of the many transportation options listed above that are already at various stages of development.

Focus of Study

The study will focus on operational solutions to accommodate safe, efficient movement of people and goods. While obviously influenced by the many competing priorities, demands, and major transit infrastructure and development initiatives at the broader scale, this review will provide specific emphasis on measures for shorter term implementation that are sustainable and will optimize the use and capacity of the existing infrastructure.

The primary focus is to identify opportunities that will initially improve traffic operations in downtown Toronto as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Initiatives that are low-cost, can be readily implemented, do not require extensive planning or design, do not require acquisition of private property, and can be supported by all road users will be given the highest priority. In addition, the study will also identify and review broader-scale changes that are likely to influence downtown traffic operations within the next ten-year period and identify opportunities for other medium and long term priorities.

Administration

A Downtown Transportation Operations Study steering committee, consisting of several City of Toronto staff, along with representatives of the Toronto Transit Commission and, Toronto Police Service will be established. The steering committee will meet on a monthly basis during the study. Additional or supplementary meetings might be scheduled as necessary. The City will designate a Project Manager, who will be the consultant's primary point of contact during the study

Deliverables

The main deliverables that the consultant will be expected to provide as part of the study are:

- A study design that will include a detailed work plan and schedule;
- Inventory of existing and planned/future conditions;
- Project evaluation framework;
- Evaluated plans/projects/proposals;
- An "Action Plan"
- Project Proposals (includes short term opportunities implemented or proposed); and
- A record of consultation that took place.

Action Plan

As part of developing a future Action Plan, the Downtown Transportation Operations Study will:

- Identify the key problems contributing to travel congestion in the downtown;
- Assess current and future traffic and transportation conditions in the area;
- Ensure there is significant opportunity for the public and community to provide input on the traffic and transportation issues and potential resolutions
- Assess and recommend short term measures to optimize the use of existing infrastructure with a view to improved traffic flow, circulation and access within the downtown, so that demand is addressed in the most efficient and sustainable means possible, with the aim of alleviating congestion and reducing travel times and emissions; and

- Establish a screening or evaluation framework within which the traffic operational impacts of any individual development plan/project that might influence the downtown transportation system will be considered not only individually but relative to its relationship with other projects.

Key factors that influence transportation operations management in the downtown area that will be considered as part of determining existing conditions are:

- Local bottlenecks;
- Parking and curbside management;
- Traffic operational controls (one way/two-way streets, turn restrictions, etc);
- Public Transportation (TTC operations, taxicabs);
- Cycling and pedestrian demands; and
- Goods movement;

Additional factors that will be considered are:

- Collision experience;
- Fine structure and enforcement protocols;
- Traffic control signal systems and coordination;
- Adjacent land uses
- Road and utility construction; and
- Private development, construction staging, and street events.

The City will provide or make available to the consultant background material and services such as base mapping, traffic and transit data and policy/operational manuals, etc. to assist in developing the Action Plan.

Short Term Opportunities

Short term opportunities identified during the study that are quick to implement and will potentially optimize the use and capacity of the existing infrastructure or resolve a specific issue may be implemented prior to completion of the overall Downtown Transportation Operations Study. Staff will report on these issues to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee. If this occurs, these opportunities and their resultant impacts will be documented in the final report on the Downtown Transportation Operations Study.

Scheduling

While the detailed schedule for the Downtown Transportation Operations Study will be developed during the preparation of the Study Design, subject to approval of Recommendation No. 1 above, the work plan could set an initiation date for the study as November 2011, with a June 2012 target date for completion of the final report on the study.

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