

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM41.19	ACTION			Ward:All
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Moving Forward Now with The Relief Subway Line: Curbing Gridlock and Connecting Toronto - by Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor John Parker

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to a re-opening of Item EX31.3. A two-thirds vote is required to re-open that Item. If re-opened, the previous Council decision remains in force unless Council decides otherwise.*

Recommendations

Councillor Josh Matlow, seconded by Councillor John Parker, recommends that:

1. City Council rescind its previous direction in Item EX31.3 in referring motions respecting the Downtown Relief Line to the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning; specifically those motions which had the effect of delegating study of the construction and environmental assessment of a Relief Subway Line to the Chief Planner for consideration in the report scheduled for Planning and Growth Management Committee in November 2013.
2. City Council affirm the Relief Subway Line as Toronto's next subway expansion priority.
3. City Council request the City Manager and appropriate City officials to seek the necessary approval under the Environmental Assessment Act using the Transit Project Approval Process as set out in Ontario Regulation 231/08, as amended, for the Relief Subway Line.
4. City Council authorize the City Manager to request funding, in full or in part, from Metrolinx to undertake the Environmental Assessment.
5. City Council refer the remaining Toronto Transit Commission and City costs associated with the Relief Subway Line Environmental Assessment to the Budget Committee to be addressed as part of its 2014 budget deliberations.

Summary

The Relief Subway Line is the rapid transit project that will most improve Toronto's transit network. It will provide an alternative to the overcrowded Yonge-University-Spadina and

Bloor-Danforth lines, curb gridlock on our City's streets and provide a better connection between our city's inner suburbs such as North York and Scarborough and the 450,000 jobs in the downtown core. The Relief Subway Line is not only justifiable from a ridership perspective but will very shortly become necessary if we are to avoid crippling overcrowding elsewhere on the subway system.

Transit experts agree that the first priority is to build a line from roughly Pape and Danforth to downtown to relieve pressure on Bloor-Yonge Station, the pinch-point in our subway system. Commuting has already become challenging for many residents as Bloor-Yonge Station is heavily overcrowded during rush hours. The next two phases are proposed to extend the line north to either Eglinton or Sheppard and north-west to the High Park area and possibly beyond.

This Motion seeks to start the Environmental Assessment process on the Relief Subway Line now so that when funding becomes available the project will be "shovel ready." City Council and the TTC have previously approved some preliminary work on the Relief Subway Line but this critical infrastructure project has never received the support and momentum of its own independent City Council directive with a commitment to secure the necessary funding to see it through to construction. The Relief Subway Line is too important and complex to carry out with ad hoc approvals and studies.

There are a number of serious geotechnical and logistical challenges to building a subway through the busy city centre. Near the surface, where we would ideally build stations, there is a tangle of existing pedestrian passageways and utility tunnels. Density and soil conditions may require the construction of a deep tunnel with mined stations, something that has never been tried in Toronto. Simply preparing for this work will be highly complex and may take several years, and we will not know what is necessary or possible until it is complete.

There is precedent for this action. On January 27, 2009 Council approved funding for an Environmental Assessment on the Yonge Street subway extension (EX28.1 Yonge Subway Extension - Environmental Assessment Submission and Project Update Presentation Item) prior to any capital commitment from our other government funding partners.

To proceed immediately to advance work on the Relief Subway Line, it is necessary to re-open EX31.3 (only as it pertains to Council's request of the Chief Planner to consider motions respecting the "downtown relief line.") City Manager Joe Pennachetti, TTC CEO Andy Byford, Chief Planner Jennifer Keesmaat and Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig have all stated that the Relief Subway Line is Toronto's top transit priority. It is not necessary to wait for the Feeling Congested consultations and Official Plan Review to determine that the Relief Subway Line is critical to Toronto's continued prosperity and mobility.

As any resident who takes our subway system knows, the Yonge-University-Spadina line is already overcrowded. During rush hours at stations like Eglinton, Sheppard or St. George it is common to wait for two or three trains before boarding and once on, you're crammed in like a sardine. The overcrowding is most critical at Bloor-Yonge Station, which is already over capacity with another 45 percent increase in riders expected over the next twenty years. Extensions of our current subway network will only achieve their full potential when they are connected through the downtown by the Relief Subway Line. It is vital that work on the Environmental Assessment begin immediately to ensure that residents won't have to wait another generation for the line to be completed. Metrolinx, the provincial transit agency, has identified the Relief Subway Line as a priority for its next phase of projects to be started within fifteen years.

Toronto can't wait that long.

Requires Re-opening

Executive Committee Item EX31.3 - City Council meeting on May 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2013 - only as it pertains to Council's request of the Chief Planner to consider motions respecting the "downtown relief line."

(Submitted to City Council on November 13 and 14, 2013 as MM41.19)

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM41.19

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-63505.pdf>