



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Proposed Approach to Study the Relief Line Initiative (formerly the Downtown Relief Line)

<b>Date:</b>	November 28, 2013
<b>To:</b>	Planning and Growth Management Committee
<b>From:</b>	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
<b>Ward:</b>	All Wards
<b>Reference Number:</b>	P:\2013\ClusterB\PLN\PGMC\PG13047

#### SUMMARY

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This report responds to questions regarding the Relief Line initiative and recommends a project assessment process and public consultation framework to determine the alignment and station locations for a new rapid transit line connecting the Danforth Subway to the Yonge Subway south of Gerrard Street. This project is required to deal with future demands on the Yonge Line that exceed capacity and to relieve congestion on that line, the Danforth subway and at the Bloor/Yonge interchange station.

It is proposed that the Relief Line Project Assessment be conducted in coordination with the Metrolinx Network Relief Strategy and Yonge Relief Study that will examine other transit network alternatives and phasing that will address relief in the Yonge Subway corridor and provide broader regional benefits. A summary is presented of studies by the TTC, Metrolinx and City Planning, as well as information on the options available to undertake an environmental assessment, and recommends that the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, proceed with the first phase of the Relief Line Project Assessment, specifically to engage in a public process to review and finalize the proposed Terms of Reference (scope of work) contained in Appendix B of this report.

The proposed Terms of Reference are intended to clearly set out the work that will be undertaken, timing and deliverables for the study. The Terms of Reference also contain a draft public consultation framework that will be used to guide development of a detailed Public Consultation Plan with public input, to ensure a transparent and accountable process that engages the public and stakeholders in the decision making process for the following stages of this study. The Terms of Reference and

accompanying Public Consultation Plan will be brought back to City Council in early 2014 for approval. TTC and Metrolinx representatives have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, be directed to undertake public consultation on the Relief Line proposed Terms of Reference and Public Consultation framework, with technical support provided by TTC staff, and report back to City Council seeking approval of these documents in early 2014.

### **Financial Impact**

Funding of \$3.028 million was included in the 2013-2022 TTC Approved Capital Plan (Council approval, January 16, 2013 under program 3.9 Buildings & Structures – Downtown Relief Line Study, category Expansion). A request for an additional \$1.0 million in funding to complete Phase 2 of this study, for a total of \$4.028 million, will be considered as part of the 2014-2023 TTC Recommended Capital Plan.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

Planning and Growth Management Committee at its meeting of February 28, 2013, in considering a presentation by TTC staff on the "Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study (DTRES) Phase I Strategic Plan" (PG22.5) adopted a motion that requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with appropriate officials, to report back to the June 20, 2013 meeting of the Committee on:

a process for establishing the criteria for selecting alignments and station locations for the first phase of the Downtown Relief Line and the subsequent measures to be taken to meet the approval requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.PG22.5>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

The City's Official Plan, adopted by Council in 2002, does not include the Relief Line concept.

Nowwithstanding this, there is a long history of proposals for downtown rapid transit expansion. Most recently, the focus has been on building a new subway line from the existing Bloor-Danforth line, east of the Don Valley Parkway, to the Downtown in order to deal with future demands on the Yonge Line that exceed capacity and relieve congestion at the critical Bloor/Yonge interchange station. This concept, formerly known as the Downtown Relief Line (DRL), has been renamed the Relief Line Project Assessment.

In 2008, Metrolinx released its draft Regional Transportation Plan, "The Big Move", which recommended the Relief Line as a project to be completed in the next 15 - 25 years.

In January 2009, Toronto City Council approved an Environmental Assessment Study for an extension of the Yonge Subway from Finch Avenue to Highway 7, and in recognition that such an extension would exacerbate the already significant crowding conditions that occur on the Yonge Subway at peak times, Council also passed the following motions:

- "Metrolinx be requested to prioritize the Downtown Relief Line within its 15-year plan..."
- "Metrolinx be requested to prioritize the Downtown Relief Line in advance of the Yonge North Extension in order to accommodate capacity issues resulting from the extension of the Yonge Subway..."
- "The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to commence the proper studies, including Environmental Assessments as required, to evaluate the merits of the downtown rapid transit line..."
- "The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to come up with a more inspiring name for the Downtown Relief Line that reflects communities and neighbourhoods that it will serve..."
- "The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to proceed with the studies necessary to construct the Downtown Relief Line".

In response to Council's request, the TTC conducted the Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study (DRTES) Phase 1 Strategic Plan. The DRTES considered options to relieve congestion on the Yonge Subway, Danforth Subway, and Bloor/Yonge Station and to provide additional transit capacity to accommodate growth in travel demand to/from downtown, including continuing the new rapid transit relief corridor further north of the Danforth to the Eglinton LRT. A report to the TTC Board in October 2012 provided the conclusions of the study and noted that staff were proceeding to further study the initial phase east section of the DRL connecting the Danforth Subway to the Yonge Subway south of Gerrard Street. The findings of the DRTES Phase 1 work were presented to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in February, 2013.

In November, 2012, Metrolinx announced its "Next Wave" of major transit projects which included the Relief Line proposal and advanced its timing to implementation in the next 15 years, versus the 15-25 year time frame originally envisaged in "The Big Move". The extension of the Yonge Subway line to York Region is also among the "Next Wave" projects, all of which are currently unfunded.

The Official Plan is currently undergoing review and the Relief Line will be among the many proposed rapid transit projects to be evaluated as part of a process to prioritize transit projects for inclusion in the revised Official Plan.

## **COMMENTS**

The current status of preliminary work for the Relief Line initiative is described below. There is currently, and will continue to be, coordination amongst the City, Metrolinx and TTC staff on these initiatives. In particular, there will be opportunity to coordinate on work in the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study and the Relief Line Project Assessment to ensure options that may involve a combination of local and regional solutions are fully vetted.

### **TTC DOWNTOWN RAPID TRANSIT EXPANSION STUDY (DRTES) PHASE 2**

The TTC has determined through previous work that the Relief Line is a project that merits consideration as a means to relieve existing congestion at the Bloor/Yonge interchange station, and accommodate future demand that will occur as the result of extending the Yonge Line north. Findings of the DRTES study were reported to the Toronto Transit Commission and Planning and Growth Management Committee in late 2012/early 2013, respectively.

Following that reporting, the TTC has commenced further preliminary work to identify and assess alignment and station location options. It is anticipated this work will be merged into the Relief Line Project Assessment with a Council approved public consultation process to review options. The conclusions and recommendations of the Relief Line Project Assessment will be submitted to the City Council for consideration.

### **REVIEW OF THE OFFICIAL PLAN'S TRANSPORTATION POLICIES**

This review is currently being led by the City Planning Division and includes the prioritization of rapid transit projects based on a comprehensive set of measurable criteria, along with broader considerations of implementation, funding availability and strategic fit.

The Relief Line (Downtown to the Danforth subway) is one of 24 proposed, unfunded rapid transit projects, excluding GO Rail expansion proposals, that are being evaluated through the "Feeling Congested" initiative as part of the Official Plan review. To date,

the first stage of a three-stage evaluation process has been completed and the second stage work has yielded some preliminary results that are undergoing public discussion. Some of these preliminary results can be found in the “Feeling Congested Phase 2 Toolkit” (Spring, 2013). It is noted the Relief Line scores well as a top performing project, as does the Waterfront LRT projects (i.e. East Bayfront and Waterfront West). The network benefits of these top performing projects, all in proximity of each other and potentially interconnected, will be further determined through work undertaken in 2014. Results will be applied in the Relief Line study and Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network study to inform decision making on the recommended solution.

The technical evaluation process will be further refined as a result of the public input received and as further analysis is conducted. The latter steps of the overall evaluation process will inform the selection of a final program of recommended rapid transit projects for adoption by Council and inclusion in the City's revised Official Plan. A report on the progress of the Official Plan Transportation review will be coming forward to the December meeting of Planning and Growth Management Committee.

### METROLINX YONGE RELIEF NETWORK STUDY

Metrolinx is currently initiating the Yonge Relief Network Study to consider regional network options for easing congestion in the Yonge corridor. In this context, potential upgrades to service on GO Rail's Barrie, Richmond Hill and Stouffville lines are being given particular attention to facilitate regional transit trips from York Region to the Downtown. The findings of the Yonge Relief Network Study could have implications for the need and timing of the Relief Line.

As noted in the initial TTC study, GO Transit service improvements could potentially address the issue of forecast overcrowding on the Yonge line but a detailed analysis of these options was determined to be beyond the scope of the initial TTC study. This gap in the analysis is now being filled by Metrolinx, whose study results are expected to be known in mid/late 2014.

Phasing of regional transit improvements will be an important output from this work. The Metrolinx study will also consider regional solutions within the City boundaries (e.g. service improvements, potential introduction of new GO stations within the City, etc.). The Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network study may identify interim improvements that can be applied prior to implementation of the Relief Line.

City staff will be reporting the findings of the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study to City Council once complete. If the study recommends a solution other than the Relief Line, further consideration will need to be given to the City's role in the project going forward.

## RELATED INITIATIVES

A number of other initiatives are under way to address subway capacity, reliability and frequency of service on the Yonge-University-Spadina subway line. The new Toronto Rocket trains will ease crowding as they accommodate 10% more passengers. The new trains will be fully-deployed to Line 1 by the end of 2014. The TTC is also working to reduce dwell times on the southbound platform of Bloor Station, by helping guide and direct passengers to and from the platform more quickly. In addition, the opening of the Spadina Subway extension to Vaughan, planned for 2016, is expected to relieve demand on the Yonge portion of the subway line by 5% to 10%. The TTC signal system is 60-years-old. The re-signalling project (Automatic Train Control) that is under way today will replace this antiquated and unreliable system with a state-of-the-art modern signal system, allowing the TTC to run more trains, more frequently – allowing capacity, ultimately, to be increased by up to 25% on the line.

In addition, the TTC and the City are studying ways to improve the reliability of the 504 King streetcar line. Next year, new low-floor streetcars begin service. These new vehicles are larger, offer all-door boarding, and proof-of-payment, significantly improving dwell times at busy stops across the network, thereby carrying more passengers with improved reliability. And starting in December, a new fleet of articulated buses begin service on the TTC's busiest bus routes. Like the new streetcars, the articulated buses are larger and have increased passenger capacity, but will also help the TTC improve reliability, but with fewer buses.

### **1. Options to Assess Environmental Impact**

There are several Environmental Assessment processes available for undertaking the evaluation of public transit projects, including:

- The Class Municipal EA process;
- The Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP);
- The Individual Environmental Assessment process; and,
- Declaration Order process.

The two processes suited to a project of this magnitude are the Transit Assessment Project Process with advance project assessment work, or the Individual Environmental Assessment process. The process that has been applied for the vast majority of major transit infrastructure projects in Toronto since 2008 is the Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP). This process is a proponent-driven, self-assessment process that requires only one approval by the Minister of the Environment before proceeding.

Each of these processes is described in further detail in Appendix A.

## **2. Study Approach for the Relief Line Project Assessment**

The Relief Line Project Assessment is a significant undertaking in scope and complexity, comparable to some of the largest subway projects in recent Toronto history, including the 8.6 kilometre extension of the Toronto-York-Spadina subway to York Region (\$ 2.6B project).

The recommended approach for this initiative is to prepare a Terms of Reference and detailed public Consultation Plan that would set the direction to complete the project assessment, including a draft Environmental Study Report, for approval by City Council.

The TPAP process would follow this process, subject to Council authority to proceed. The Relief Line Project Assessment process embodies a number of attributes that are appropriate for a project of this magnitude and complexity including:

- Development of a Terms of Reference, setting out the scope of the work that will be undertaken, proposed public consultation, and timing and deliverables, all of which will be finalized with input from the public and key stakeholders. Proposed Terms of Reference are contained in this report, Appendix B. Following public review and input, the Terms of Reference will be finalized and brought back to Planning and Growth Management Committee and City Council for approval, in order to provide direction for the study;
- Requirement to assess the full range of alternatives to the undertaking as part of the environmental review. There is no short-listing of reasonable alternatives. This ensures an objective, thorough consideration of a broad range of solutions; and,
- A robust public consultation program based on the proposed framework set out in Section 2(b) of this report and Appendix B. The program will seek to maximize outreach and public input to decision-making in a participatory public engagement process.

In summary, these enhancements are proposed to ensure the Relief Line Project Assessment includes a rigorous due diligence review conducted in a transparent, consultative manner with oversight provided by City Council.

In terms of project co-ordination, the Toronto-TTC-Metrolinx Executive Transit Coordination Committee and the Program Committee (comprised of senior executives from Metrolinx, the City of Toronto and the TTC), will oversee both the City's initial Relief Line Terms of Reference review and Public Consultation plan development, and the Metrolinx study, to ensure co-ordination on common information including study objectives and reporting timelines.

The existing City/TTC Executive Coordination Committee and Capital Co-ordination Committee will provide a similar oversight role for the City's initial Relief Line Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan development.

## **a. Tasks**

The Relief Line Project Assessment will include several inter-related phases of work, including:

- Project assessment stage:
  - Phase 1 – Study Introduction
    - Phase 1A – Review of Proposed Terms of Reference and Development of a Detailed Public Consultation Plan;
    - Phase 1B – Problem Statement and Rationale for the Project;
  - Phase 2 – Develop "long list" of options and evaluation criteria;
  - Phase 3 – Evaluate options to produce "short list";
  - Phase 4 – Evaluate "short list" of options, to produce draft recommendations ; and,
- TPAP project review

The intent of this report is to seek approval to proceed only with Phase 1A – "Review of Proposed Terms of Reference and Development of a Detailed Public Consultation Plan".

Authority to proceed with the four project assessment phases that follow Phase 1A, and the TPAP stage, will be sought following Council approval of the Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan. The tasks comprising each of these proposed phases are described below.

### **PROPOSED PROJECT ASSESSMENT PHASING**

#### **PHASE 1- STUDY INTRODUCTION**

**PHASE 1A – Review of Proposed Terms of Reference and Development of a Detailed Public Consultation Plan**

Prior to commencing the project assessment, the proposed study Terms of Reference will be taken to the public for review and comment. As a key component of this review, the public consultation framework will be used to develop a detailed Public Consultation Plan with input from the public. A further key task in this phase will be confirming a new name for this initiative; consistent with City Council's direction to establish "...a more inspiring name for the Downtown Relief Line that reflects communities and neighbourhoods that it will serve..."

The Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan will be brought back to the City Council for approval, following which the project can proceed. It is anticipated this phase of work will be completed in early spring, 2014.



## PHASE 1B – Problem Statement and Rationale for the Project

The objective of the Relief Line Project Assessment Phase 1B consultation will be to:

- Introduce the study to the public;
- Include a synopsis of existing and future conditions; and
- Provide background work from the earlier studies including the technology analysis.

Key elements for the public to comment/input on will include:

- Rationale for the project;
- Problem statement; and,
- Proposed study process

It is anticipated that Phase 1B consultation will be conducted by late spring, 2014. The public consultation for Phases 1A and 1B will occur jointly with Metrolinx where appropriate.

### PHASE 2 - Develop “Long List” of Options and Evaluation Criteria

The second phase in the project assessment stage would undertake specific tasks defined in the finalized Terms of Reference, including development of a "long list" of options, and selecting an evaluation framework and criteria to be applied in the study.

Development of the draft "long list" will include consideration of alternative station locations, including terminus point alternatives along the Bloor-Danforth and in the Downtown, and alignment options including options for crossing of the Don Valley. Development of the draft evaluation framework and criteria will consider a variety of approaches that are applicable to planning and engineering studies, and will consider both qualitative and quantitative measures.

It is anticipated consultation in this phase will be aimed at developing options and soliciting new ideas, and considering the various evaluation framework approaches, and identifying evaluation criteria for consideration.

It is expected that consultation on this phase of work will occur in mid 2014.

### PHASE 3 - Evaluation of Options to Produce a "Short List"

The third phase in the project assessment stage would include the analysis and evaluation of a comprehensive “long list” of options, to create a "short list" for further detailed assessment.

The terminus station options will be assessed against key “fatal flaws” criteria and any that fail these tests will be screened out from further consideration.

The in-line station options will be assessed against a smaller set of these evaluation criteria. Once the station location options have been considered, the review will consider the critically important options for crossing the Don Valley.

Following this, preliminary alignment options will be reviewed and considered in the context of potential longer term "network" opportunities established in coordination with work being undertaken for the Official Plan transportation policy review.

It is anticipated consultation in this phase will focus on understanding the scope of assessment, how the methodology and evaluation have been applied in the decision making process and whether any modifications are necessary to ensure objective and accurate outcomes.

Consultation for this phase of work is expected to be held in early 2015.

#### PHASE 4 - Evaluate Short List of Options, Identify Draft Recommendations

The fourth phase in the project assessment stage would include the analysis and evaluation of the short list of options determined in Phase 3. This phase of work would review environmental impacts at a greater level of detail and mitigation measures would be developed to attempt to address negative impacts. The analysis and evaluation of the short list options would result in identification of the draft recommended option.

The remaining terminus station options would undergo a full assessment using the comprehensive eight-criterion framework for the evaluation of major transportation projects recently proposed by the City as part of the "Feeling Congested" initiative.

Phase 4 consultation is proposed to reflect a similar approach to the Phase 3 task, with an emphasis on the precision of the output to ensure the recommendations emerging from this exercise have been determined in an appropriate manner. In particular, there will be a focus on the review of qualitative measures to ensure findings have been objectively documented.

Following completion of Phase 4, a draft final Environmental Project Report will be submitted to the TTC Board and City Council, providing study findings and recommendations, and seeking authority to issue the notice of commencement for the TPAP stage of final project review.

It is anticipated the consultation for this phase of work will be held in late spring 2015.

#### TPAP STAGE – FINAL PROJECT REVIEW

The Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) requires proponents complete the steps prescribed in Sections 6 through 17 of Ontario Regulation 231/08, within specified time

frames. TPAP essentially exempts proponents of all public transit projects from the requirements of Part II of the Environment Assessment Act.

The prescribed time frame for the TPAP process, up to and including the publishing of notice of completion, is 120 days. This generally translates into sufficient time to undertake a final review process for the project, following documentation of the Relief Line Project Assessment.

In this stage of the study, effort will be applied to a focused consultation respecting the work that has been completed in the four phases of project assessment.

Tasks that must be undertaken in the TPAP stage of work include:

- Prepare and distribute TPAP notice of commencement;
  - Public consultation on the transit project;
  - Finalize Environmental Project Report (EPR);
- Publish notice of completion of the EPR; and,
- Submit statement of completion of TPAP to the Minister.

This work must be completed in the prescribed 4 month period. The Minister Review period occurs following this and includes:

- 30-day Review/Objection Period;
- 35-day Minister consideration of impacts related to matters of Provincial Importance and/or constitutionally protected Aboriginal or Treaty Right; and,
- Post 35-day Review Period – Minister's Notice - Transit Project can proceed without or with conditions, or, additional work is required.

## **b. Public Consultation**

As noted, it is proposed the public consultation will initially be structured based on the framework contained in the Proposed Terms of Reference in Appendix B of this report. A detailed Public Consultation Plan will be developed through the public consultation process seeking input on the Terms of Reference in Phase 1A of the work.

It is proposed that consultation take place regularly throughout the study, at multiple points for each of the four phases of the Relief Line Project Assessment. The consultation plan can be structured to involve the public and stakeholders in a participatory process. The Study Team would work directly with participants to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered, to ensure a high degree of transparency and inclusion in the decision-making process. Examples of the kinds of interactions that could be applied include:

- Public workshops/interactive open houses with live webcasting;
- Citizen Advisory Group collaboration;
- On-line consultation/surveys;

- Community Stakeholder meetings/workshops;
- Web based Information sharing on the consultation process and outcomes;
- Internet and social media engagement (project website, email, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube); and,
- Ongoing documentation related to the consultation events, posted to a project website.

Consideration will be given to forming a wide ranging Citizen Advisory Committee comprising, but not necessarily limited to, the following representation:

- Councillor's reference groups;
- Community groups and associations;
- Advocacy groups;
- Stakeholder groups/property owners; and,
- Members of the public at large.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There is a pressing need to increase transit service and capacity into the downtown in order to relieve pressure points on the Yonge Subway, to accommodate growth, and as a precursor to other subway expansions in Toronto. It is recommended the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, proceed with the first phase of the Relief Line Project Assessment, specifically to include a public process to review and finalize the proposed Terms of Reference (scope of work) and Public Consultation framework contained in Appendix B of this report.

The final Terms of Reference and accompanying Public Consultation Plan will be submitted to City Council in early 2014 for approval. Authority to proceed with later phases of the project assessment, as described in this report, will be sought at that time.

This study will be closely coordinated with other work by Metrolinx, including cross-representation on the City/TTC/Metrolinx Technical Advisory Committees and senior level Co-ordination Committees.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jennifer Keesmaat, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: Summary of Options to Study Environmental Impacts  
Appendix B: Relief Line Project Assessment: Terms of Reference

## **Appendix A: Summary of Options to Study Environmental Impacts**

There are four Environmental Assessment processes available for undertaking the evaluation of public transit projects:

- a. The Class Municipal EA process - Available for all public transit undertakings except for heavy rail (subway) and, therefore, does not apply to the Relief Line project.
- b. The Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) - A proponent-driven, self-assessment process that does not require approval by the Minister of the Environment before proceeding. However, proponents must complete the prescribed steps of the transit project assessment process as defined in sections 6 through 17 of Ontario Regulation 231/08, within specified time frames. TPAP essentially exempts proponents of all public transit projects from the requirements of Part II of the Environment Assessment Act. The transit project assessment process is a focused impact assessment process that includes consultation, an assessment of potential positive and negative impacts, an assessment of measures to mitigate negative impacts, and documentation.
- c. The Individual Environmental Assessment process - Typically applies to large-scale, complex transportation infrastructure undertakings with the potential for significant environmental effects and major public interest. An Individual EA may take several years to complete and requires a Terms of Reference to be prepared which must be evaluated by the Minister of the Environment (MOE) prior to the start of the remaining stages of the Environmental Assessment process. The Terms of Reference defines the work plan for the Individual EA and must be developed through extensive public consultation. Once the Terms of Reference is approved, the proponent may take as much time as needed to complete the remaining stages of the Individual EA process and prepare an EA document for submission to the MOE. The EA document is then made available for public inspection for several weeks, during which time the public and other interested stakeholders may identify any outstanding issues to the MOE. The Minister then decides on whether the EA document will be: approved (possibly with conditions), referred to mediation, or referred to the Environmental Review Tribunal for a hearing.
- d. Declaration Order process - Current Provincial government policy is to undertake transit projects through the TPAP or Individual EA process but in this case, the option is to apply for an exemption to part or all of the Individual EA process. The application for exemption must describe the proposed process to replace part or all of the Individual EA process. Exemptions that are proposed by way of a Declaration Order are considered by the Minister under a narrow range of circumstances which, in the case of the Relief Line, would entail demonstrating that this approach is in the public interest. In making the application for an

exemption, the proponent must demonstrate to the MOE that the public has been consulted on the proposed approach and that there is justification as to why TPAP cannot be applied. The Minister has a minimum of six months to consider the application for exemption and, during that time, the Ministry will undertake its own public consultation on the matter. Ministry staff has cautioned that for a project as significant as the DRL, the approval process would be much longer than six months. If the application for exemption is accepted, the Minister will create a new Regulation with "conditions" describing the proposed process. The new Regulation is then subject to approval by Provincial Cabinet.

# Appendix B:

## Proposed Relief Line Project Assessment Terms of Reference

# 1.0 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Introduction

The City of Toronto and the TTC are undertaking a study, known as the “Relief Line Project Assessment” to establish the preferred technology, alignment, and station location options, for a new rapid transit line linking the downtown core with the Bloor-Danforth Subway, between Broadview and Coxwell subway stations. The main purpose of this new rapid transit line is to relieve overcrowding on the Yonge Subway line and congested Bloor-Yonge transfer station.

Significant inbound transit capacity deficiencies exist today in the morning peak period on the Yonge Subway and on many GO rail lines. Streetcar routes east and west of the downtown are similarly constrained. To address these deficiencies and to manage growth in the near to medium term, the TTC is:

- Increasing the capacity of the Yonge Subway line through the acquisition of new, larger Toronto Rocket trains, and implementing an Automatic Train Control system. These improvements are expected to increase line capacity by 35%; and,
- Increasing the capacity of the downtown streetcar network through the acquisition of new, larger articulated streetcars.

Metrolinx is also implementing significant increases in peak hour train service on most GO rail lines, contingent on funding availability, including service improvements in the Lake Shore corridors and two-way, all day GO Rail service on all other lines. Even with planned TTC and GO improvements, the Yonge Subway is forecast to be at, or over, capacity for trips destined to Downtown Toronto by 2031.

The proposed northerly extension of the Yonge Subway from Finch Avenue to Highway 7, and the extension of the Bloor-Danforth Subway to Sheppard Avenue, planned for completion by 2023, will further exacerbate the capacity shortfall if no further action is taken to relieve overcrowding on the Yonge line.



## **1.2 Background**

### **1.2.1 Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study - Phase 1 Strategic Plan**

In January 2009, Toronto City Council approved an Environmental Assessment Study for an extension of the Yonge Subway from Finch Avenue to Highway 7 and this project is currently in the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan. In conjunction with that approval, City Council also passed a number of motions related to concerns that such an extension would exacerbate the already significant crowding conditions that occur on the Yonge Subway at peak times. In particular, City Council approved the following motions:

- *"Metrolinx be requested to prioritize the Downtown Relief Line within its 15-year plan . . .";*
- *"Metrolinx be requested to prioritize the Downtown Relief Line in advance of the Yonge North Extension in order to accommodate capacity issues resulting from the extension of the Yonge Subway"; and,*
- *"The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to commence the proper studies, including Environmental Assessments as required, to evaluate the merits of the Downtown Rapid Transit Line . . ."*
- *"The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to come up with a more inspiring name for the Downtown Relief Line that reflects communities and neighbourhoods that it will serve...";*
- *"The Toronto Transit Commission be requested to proceed with the studies necessary to construct the Downtown Relief Line".*

The Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study (DRTES), Phase 1 Strategic Plan (2012), was initiated by TTC in 2010 in response to City Council's request. The study assessed the need for additional rapid transit capacity into Downtown Toronto in the context of the proposed Yonge Subway Extension and other planned transit improvements serving Downtown Toronto.

#### **DRTES Findings**

DRTES found that the Yonge Subway, and much of the GO Rail network, will be at or over capacity for trips destined to Downtown Toronto by 2031, even with improvements currently being implemented or planned by the TTC and GO Transit.

The most significant capacity issues are related to long and medium distance trips from the east and north. There is a complex relationship between the level of demand for rapid transit into the downtown and the capacity of the system to provide for those demands, and there are a number of key issues that will need to be addressed in the next 20 years:

**The Yonge Subway will reach capacity.** Even assuming a significant increase in the Yonge Subway capacity with the implementation of Toronto Rocket trains and Automatic Train Control signalling systems, the Yonge Subway line will still be approaching capacity by 2031. Capacity will continue to be constrained south of Bloor-Yonge Station. There will be little spare capacity on the Yonge Subway to accommodate further increases in transit ridership beyond those forecasts for 2031. In addition, if the Barrie and Stouffville GO lines do not have adequate future capacity to accommodate potential demand, some GO riders will want to divert to the Yonge-University-Spadina Subway line, adding further demand to the line and exacerbating its potential capacity problems.

The proposed extension of the Yonge Subway, from Finch Avenue to Highway 7, is forecast to result in ridership exceeding the capacity of the Yonge Subway line before 2031 if no further action is taken to relieve overcrowding on the line.

**Bloor-Yonge Station has limited capacity for passenger transfers.**

Bloor-Yonge station is currently a key transfer point in the subway network. Today, virtually all demand from the east and significant demand from the west on the Bloor-Danforth line destined to the downtown core transfer at Bloor-Yonge station, resulting in very large transfer volumes at this station. The northerly extension of the Bloor- Danforth Subway from Kennedy Station to Sheppard Avenue, planned for completion by 2023, will add to this demand.

The situation is exacerbated by full trains on the Yonge Subway, resulting in increased dwell times on the station platforms. With the currently-planned rapid transit network and services, by 2031 the critical passenger transfer movements at Bloor-Yonge Station are expected to increase by 45% and will require substantial improvements to be made at Bloor-Yonge Station to increase passenger capacity.

**TTC Union Station and other downtown subway station capacity is an issue.** Although the TTC is implementing improvements to Union Subway Station, the significant growth in passenger flows at this and other downtown subway stations (such as King Station) may approach or exceed station capacities in the future, during peak periods.

**Quality of surface transit operations in mixed traffic needs improvement.**

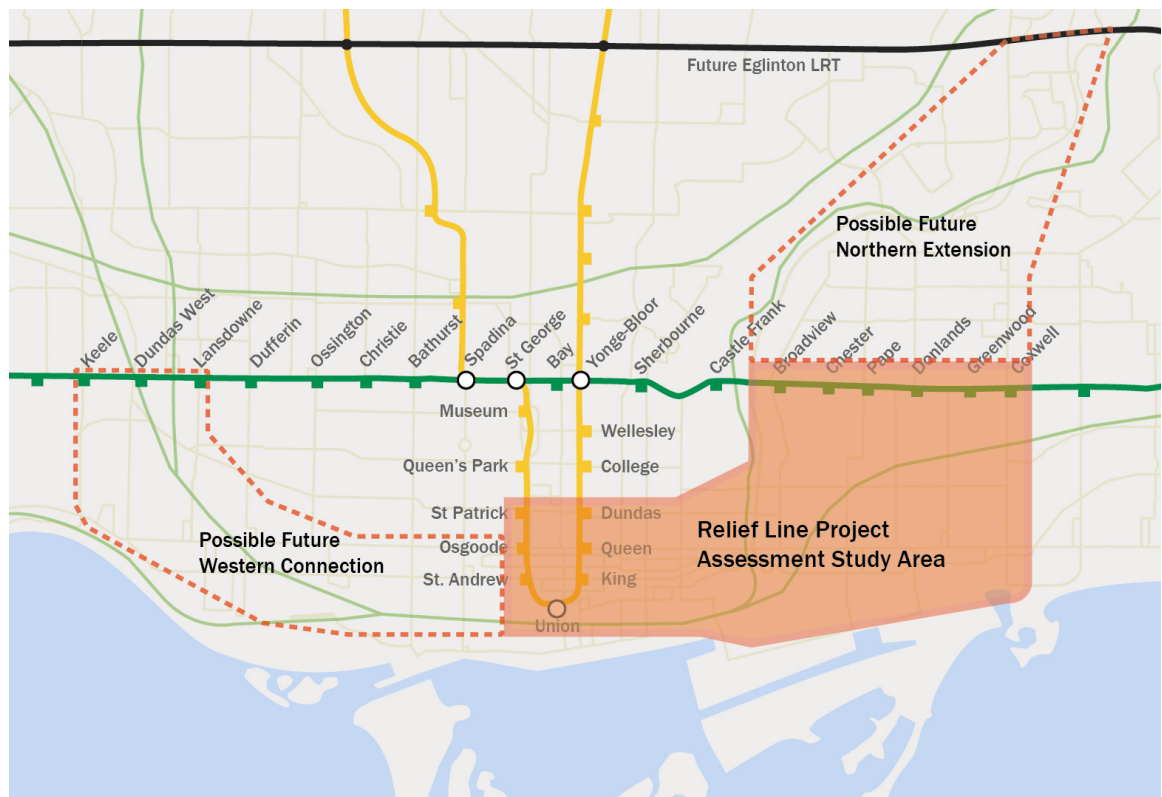
With the new larger streetcars in operation, surface services can provide adequate capacity to accommodate the forecast demand from the “shoulder” areas adjacent to the downtown **only if** the current quality of service provided in mixed traffic can be maintained and improved. Typically, such quality improvements can be achieved only through significant traffic operational changes ranging from increased parking and turning prohibitions up to providing various types of transit rights-of-way.

## Relief Line Concept

DRTES evaluated the benefits of a new subway-like transit service operating in a tunnel to relieve congestion on the Yonge Subway line and at the congested Bloor-Yonge transfer station.

Conceptually, and in its full configuration, the “Relief Line” would connect the Downtown with the Bloor-Danforth Subway at two locations, one to the east of Downtown and one to the west. The eastern connection was assumed to be somewhere between Broadview and Coxwell subway stations. An extension of the east line to Eglinton Avenue (in the vicinity of Don Mills Road) was also evaluated. The western connection was assumed to be somewhere between Dundas West and High Park subway stations. The “Relief Line” would provide alternative access to the Downtown allowing some passengers to avoid the congested Bloor-Yonge transfer station. The area of alignment considerations is conceptually shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Relief Line Study Area (Area of Alignment Considerations)



Four “phases” of the relief line were tested:

- Option 1 - easterly connection to Bloor-Danforth only
- Option 2A - easterly and westerly connections to Bloor-Danforth

- Option 2B - easterly connection to Bloor-Danforth plus northerly extension to Eglinton
- Option 3 - easterly and westerly connections to Bloor-Danforth with northern extension to Eglinton

The study concluded that all four options would:

- provide increased transit capacity to relieve the pressure on the Yonge Subway;
- provide relief to the Bloor-Yonge Station;
- provide flexibility for the TTC subway system; and
- Improve transit service to the downtown shoulder areas and relief to congestion on the streetcar network.

DRTES also concluded that, as an initial phase, Option 1 (easterly connection to Bloor-Danforth only) provides the greatest and most immediate benefits to relieving overcrowding on the Yonge Subway.

### **1.2.2 Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study and Co-ordination of Studies**

DRTES recognized that improvements to GO Rail corridors to the north (i.e. Stouffville, Richmond Hill, and Barrie) could potentially achieve some of the benefits of a “Relief Line”. Discussions with Metrolinx, while DRTES was underway, concluded that a detailed analysis of such options was beyond the scope of DTRES.

Metrolinx recently initiated a network study to investigate and evaluate options to relieve the Yonge-University-Spadina Subway and provide the greatest system wide benefits. The relief line is a priority project in The Big Move and part of the Next Wave list of projects in the investment strategy. Options to be considered include: improvements to GO Rail corridors; subway and LRT network options; and, potential policy interventions (e.g. fare changes). The study will assess which alternatives will provide the greatest net value and system-wide benefits.

The conclusions of this study would address:

- The timing and priority for a new subway line in Toronto downtown; and/or
- Other GTHA network capacity improvements and policies (such as GO service and fares). This would also require a phasing of priorities.

The conclusions of the study will either confirm the need for the “Relief Line”, as recommended in DRTES (Phase 1), or recommend an equally effective alternative to relieve overcrowding on the Yonge Subway line.

The City/TTC Relief Line Project Assessment and Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study will be coordinated as two separate but interrelated initiatives under the umbrella of a Regional Relief Strategy.

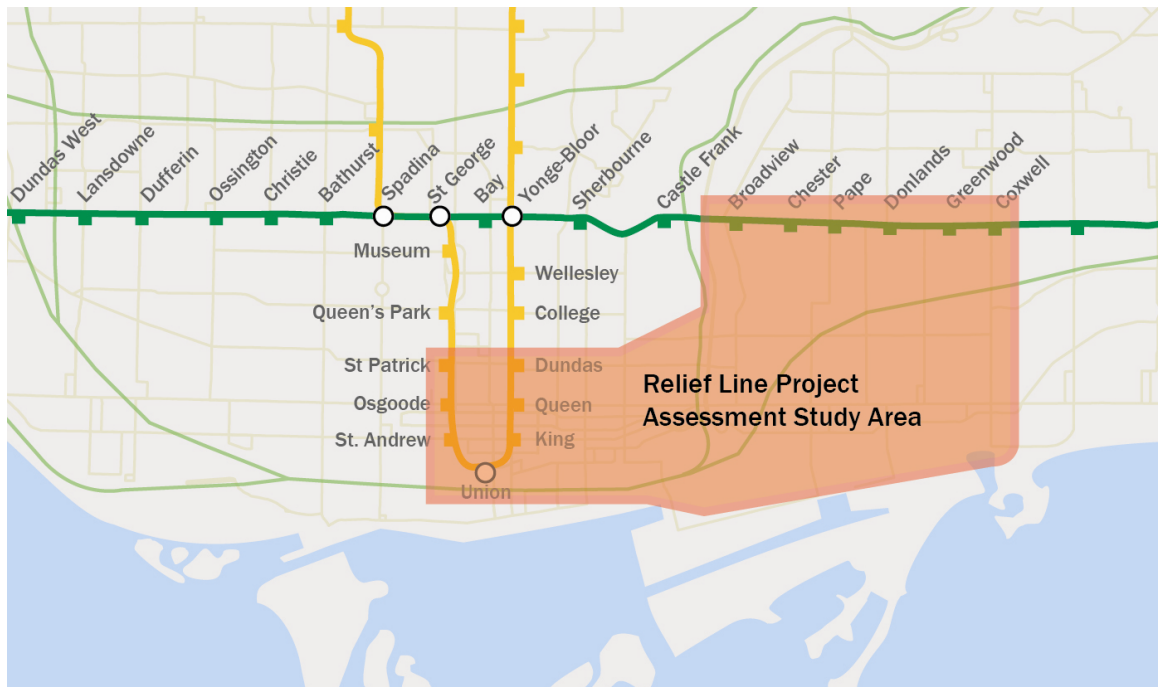
# 2.0 Project Description

## 2.1 Purpose of the Study

The City of Toronto is now proceeding with the first phase of public consultation that will lead to a technical analysis of the alignment, technology and station location options for the initial phase of the “Relief Line” as recommended in DRTES (Phase 1). This study, which is the second phase of DRTES, is being referred to as the “Relief Line Project Assessment”.

The study will evaluate options to connect the Yonge-University-Spadina Subway in Downtown Toronto to the Bloor-Danforth Subway between Broadview and Coxwell stations. Figure 2 shows the “Relief Line” (hereafter called the Relief Line) study area.

Figure 2. Relief Line Project Assessment Study Area



## **2.2 Study Team Organization**

A Project Team will be formed to provide ongoing direction to the consultant and monitor overall study progress. Initially, the Project Team will include key City staff, technical resources from the TTC, as well as project consulting resources. The City will be responsible for the overall management and administration of the study for the initial phase of consultation on the Terms of Reference and Public Consultation framework. The Terms of Reference and accompanying Public Consultation Plan will be submitted to City Council in early 2014 for approval, at which time the Study Team organization for the remaining phases of the project assessment work will be reported.

The Project Team will steer a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of staff from a relevant TTC and City Divisions having expertise required to ensure the successful completion of the initial phase of the project. The TAC would also include representation by Metrolinx to provide ongoing coordination with their Yonge Relief Network Study. Similarly, The City of Toronto and TTC will participate on Metrolinx's TAC.

The cross-representation on the TACs will provide close coordination and information sharing between the two studies on technical tasks as well as on public communication and consultation.

## **2.3 Project Co-ordination**

The Relief Line Assessment and Metrolinx's Yonge Relief Network Study represent parallel strategies for addressing overcrowding on the Yonge study. The Toronto-TTC-Metrolinx Executive Transit Coordination Committee and Program Committee (comprised of senior executives from Metrolinx, the City of Toronto and the TTC), will oversee both the City's initial Relief Line Terms of Reference review and Public Consultation Plan development, and the Metrolinx study, to ensure co-ordination on common and consistent base assumptions, study objectives and reporting timelines.

The existing City/TTC Executive Coordination Committee and Capital Co-ordination Committee will provide a similar oversight role for the City/TTC Relief Line Project Assessment.

It is anticipated Metrolinx will report on the findings of the Yonge Relief Network Study to its Board toward the end of 2014. Findings of both Relief Line Project Assessment and the Metrolinx study will be reported to the TTC Board and City Council by the second quarter of 2015.

It is anticipated that the conclusions and recommendations of the Metrolinx report to its Board and the reports to the TTC Board and City Council will align. Reporting will take into consideration:

- Metrolinx preferred network solution or combination of solutions.

- Identification of a preferred option for implementing the eastern Relief Line.

The end result will be a coordinated recommendation on which project, or projects, should proceed to the Transportation Project Assessment Process Stage.

## **2.4 Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) Stage**

Reports to TTC Board/City Council and the Metrolinx Board on the conclusions and recommendations of the Relief Line Project Assessment and the Yonge Relief Network Study will lead to decisions on whether the Relief Line, or an alternative project or projects, will advance to the Transportation Project Assessment Process (TPAP) stage. Any recommended project(s) must complete TPAP before advancing to detailed design and construction.

TPAP is a proponent-driven, self-assessment process that does not require approval by the Minister of the Environment. However, proponents must complete the prescribed steps of the transit project assessment process as defined in sections 6 through 17 of Ontario Regulation 231/08, within specified time frames. TPAP essentially exempts proponents of all public transit projects from the requirements of Part II of the Environment Assessment Act. The transit project assessment process is a focused impact assessment process that includes consultation, an assessment of potential positive and negative impacts, an assessment of measures to mitigate negative impacts, and documentation.

Tasks that must be undertaken in accordance with TPAP include:

- Preparation and distribution of TPAP notice of commencement;
- Public consultation on the transit project;
- Finalization of the Environmental Project Report (EPR);
- Publication of notice of completion of the EPR; and,
- Submission of statement of completion of TPAP to the Minister of the Environment.

This work must be completed in the prescribed 4 month period. The Minister's review period follows and includes a:

- 30-day Review Period;
- 35-day period for the Minister to consider of impacts related to matters of Provincial Importance and/or constitutionally protected Aboriginal or Treaty Rights; and,
- Post 35-day Review Period - Minister's Notice. The project can either proceed unconditionally or with conditions. Alternatively, the Minister can require additional work to be completed.

## 3.0 Proposed Scope of Work

The Relief Line Project Assessment proposed scope consists of 4 discreet phases of activity consisting of technical analysis and public consultation and engagement.

### 3.1 Phase 1

#### **Phase 1A – Review of Proposed Terms of Reference and Development of a Detailed Public Consultation Plan**

Prior to commencing the project assessment, the proposed study Terms of Reference will be taken to the public for review and comment. As a key component of this review, the public consultation framework will be used to develop a detailed Public Consultation Plan with input from the public. A further key task in this phase will be confirming a new name for this initiative, consistent with City Council's direction to establish "...a more inspiring name for the Downtown Relief Line that reflects communities and neighbourhoods that it will serve...".

Collectively, these two Phase 1A deliverables will form the "road map" for the study. The Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan will be brought back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee and City Council in early spring 2014 for approval, at which time authority will be sought for the project to proceed.

#### **Phase 1B – Problem Statement and Rationale for the Project**

The objective of the Relief Line Project Assessment Phase 1B consultation is to:

- Introduce the study to the public
- Include a synopsis of existing and future conditions, and
- Provide background work from the earlier studies including the technology analysis

Phase 1B will present the DRTES Phase 1 findings. Key elements for the public to comment/input on will include:

- Rationale for the project;
- Problem Statement; and,
- Study process.



Phase 1B will also include an assessment of the existing and future conditions. An inventory of the following is being performed to develop the context for next stages of work:

- Background Studies;
- Planning and Policy Context;
- Land Use and Development;
- Existing and Future Travel Demands;
- Socio-Economic Environment;
- Natural Heritage;
- Archaeological and Heritage; and
- Utilities.

The Public Consultation for Phase 1B is anticipated to occur in late spring 2014, jointly with Metrolinx where appropriate. It will introduce the Relief Line Project Assessment to the public, its purpose and objective, study area, and established terms of reference.

Ongoing consultation with Metrolinx will be a joint effort or coordinated, depending on the range of issues and appropriateness to combine consultations. Communication will be coordinated for both studies under the umbrella of the Regional Relief Strategy.

### **3.2 Phase 2 – Evaluation Framework and Long List of Options**

It is anticipated City planning and transportation objectives will provide the framework upon which to develop the long list of options. As part of this work, options will be developed based on a broad range of guiding criteria, policies and plans at a local and citywide level, having regard for:

- The need to increase transit capacity into the downtown and provide relief to Yonge Subway, Bloor-Yonge Station and streetcar network;
- Policy frameworks (City, Metrolinx, Provincial), to identify the policy directions from the City, Regional, and Provincial perspective;
- Future land use, to determine the projected land use and form of the city in and around the Relief Line corridor study area. This will be conducted through review of the Official Plan designations, neighbourhood/community plans, and proposed major developments with consideration for:
  - Areas of change and of stability;
  - Connectivity to existing transit and transportation facilities/networks;
  - Proximity to key destinations; and,

- Physical constraints and opportunities.

From this exercise, the long list of options for station locations and transit alignments will be developed and made available for public comment in Public Consultation Phase 2. New options that may be identified by the public through this process will be similarly tested against the aforementioned objectives and if appropriate, will be brought forward for further consideration.

The development of the Evaluation Criteria is based on the City's list of 8 decision-making criteria that have been identified through the Official Plan review of transportation policies to guide Toronto's decisions on transportation investments. The intent of adopting these factors for the evaluation of the Relief Line initiative long list options is to have an aligned vision with the City to employ similar criteria in making investment decisions about transportation projects. The 8 broad factors are:

- Choice;
- Experience;
- Social Equity;
- Shaping the City;
- Healthy Neighbourhoods;
- Public Health & Environment;
- Affordable; and
- Supports Growth.

Phase 2 public consultation is anticipated to occur in mid 2014, and will provide the opportunity for the public to provide input on the long list of station locations and alignment options and on the evaluation criteria.

### **3.3 Phase 3 – Evaluation of the Long List of Options**

The public input on the evaluation criteria in Public Consultation Phase 2 will be incorporated and refined. New options identified by the public will be assessed with the initial long list of options for evaluation.

The evaluation of the long list of options will be conducted in two steps. The first step will be determination of "Fatal Flaws" such as physical constraints that present insurmountable challenges for constructability, conflict with major utilities and maintaining existing subway operations or significant geotechnical conditions and constraints. Options that have Fatal Flaws will not be taken forward.

The second step is the remaining potential options evaluated against the guiding evaluation framework. The framework is expanded and developed into more detailed criteria that are specific to the terminal/interchange stations on the Bloor-Danforth Subway and Yonge-University Subway lines, and the in-line stations. They are then applied to the terminal options and interchanges with the Bloor-Danforth Subway and Yonge-University Subway, in which a shortlist would

emerge that have been assessed to be the most effective in meeting transit and planning objectives. Similarly, the shortlist options of the in-line stations are identified by evaluating the station that are the most effective in meeting City planning objectives recognizing the need to, among other things, protect stable residential neighbourhoods. From this process, the long list of options are evaluated to yield the shortlist of options.

Phase 3 public consultation is expected to occur in early 2015, to provide the public an opportunity to review and provide input on the Fatal Flaw analysis, the long list options evaluation and on the shortlist of options.

### **3.4 Phase 4 – Evaluation of Shortlisted Options and Recommended Option**

Taking into consideration the public input on the shortlist of options, the shortlist is then further evaluated to determine the recommended alignment. The Don Valley crossing analysis is performed to identify the constraints and opportunities to have above-grade or below-grade connections through the Don Valley River. This evaluation of the shortlist station options against the Don Valley crossing options would determine possible linkages that connect downtown and the area east of the Don Valley. From there possible alignments are determined, and based on the guiding evaluation framework, criteria are applied to determine the recommended Relief Line alignment. The final deliverable will include the functional planning and conceptual design of the Relief Line alignment.

The public's input on the evaluation criteria and opinions through the evaluation of the long list and shortlist of options will be considered and applied where possible in the functional planning and conceptual design of the Relief Line alignment. There will also be stakeholders' meetings throughout the four phases to receive input, guidance and advice.

In addition to determining a recommended solution for the Relief Line, it is possible the Metrolinx study will identify interim improvements that can be applied in the early stages of project phasing. Longer term transit network opportunities will also be confirmed through coordination with the ongoing Official Plan transportation policy update.

Phase 4 public consultation is expected to occur in late spring 2015 and will provide the opportunity for the public to comment on the evaluation of the shortlist and the recommended Relief Line alignment.

### **3.5 TTC and City Council Approvals**

Following Phase 4, the Relief Line Project Assessment process, analysis, consultation and recommendations will be summarized in the Relief Line Project Assessment Report. It is anticipated the Assessment Report would be submitted to the TTC Board and City Council with staff recommendations regarding proceeding with the recommended project, communication to Metrolinx and the Province and if appropriate, submission to the Province for the Transit Project Assessment Process.

# 4.0 Proposed Public Consultation and Communications

## 4.1 Public Consultation Guiding Principles

The goal of the project's proposed public consultation program is to generate broad participation by integrating residents, businesses, and key interest groups into a participatory public engagement process.

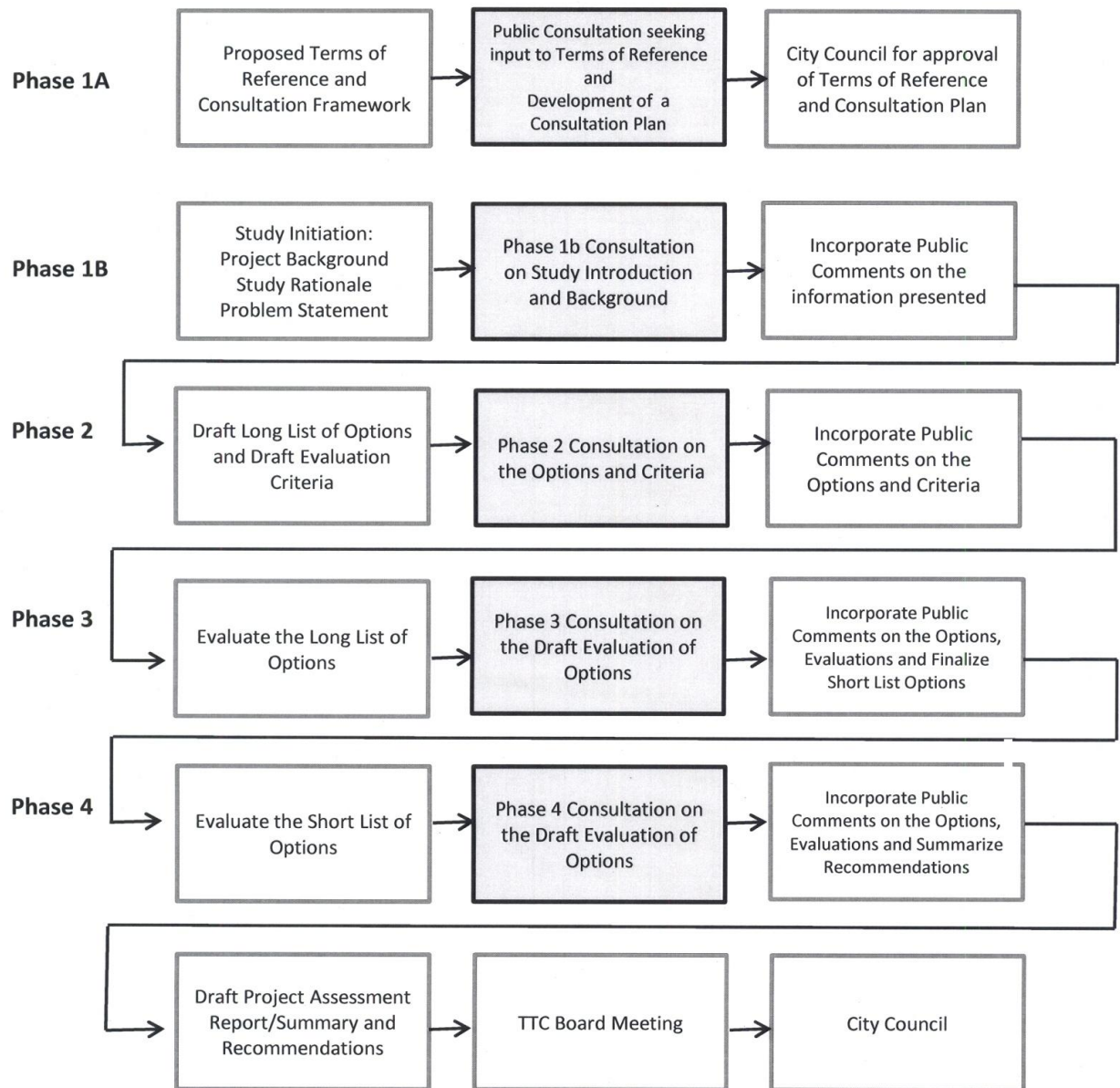
As an initial approach, the scope of public consultation work should consider the following principles:

- Inclusiveness - engage the widest possible audience through multiple consultation opportunities;
- Timeliness - offer early and ongoing opportunities for participation well before decisions are made;
- Transparency - participation will be widely communicated through multiple communications channels;
- Balance - provide opportunities for a diversity of perspectives and opinions to be raised and considered;
- Flexibility - adapt as required to meet the needs of participants; and,
- Traceability - demonstrate the impact of participant input on decision making.

## 4.2 Proposed Public Consultation Framework

The proposed Public Consultation Framework will be vetted through a consultation consultant retained by the City with expertise in designing consultation plans, to refine the framework and related materials prior to seeking public input on the proposed approach. At this point, it is suggested the consultation program could be comprised of 5 rounds of consultation; one for each phase of the study described in Section 3 of this Terms of Reference, plus initial consultation on the Terms of Reference itself. Each round could be designed to provide opportunities for the public to learn about the project and its progress, ask questions, share ideas, and voice concerns. The proposed public consultation framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Relief Line Project Assessment - Public Consultation Framework



As a suggested approach, each round could include:

- interactive public open houses in various locations in the study area;
- stakeholder engagement meetings and/or workshops;
- internet-based engagement through a project website and social media; and
- documentation of all public and stakeholder commentary received.

Prior to each round of public consultation, it is anticipated local City Councillors, and TTC Commissioners, could be briefed on the study's progress and findings to date. They would also have an opportunity to preview material to be presented at upcoming public and stakeholder meetings.

A Citizen Advisory Committee, appointed in consultation with local City Councillors, could also be consulted prior to each round of public consultation on the study's progress, key findings to date, and emerging issues.

A stakeholder roster will be compiled, in consultation with local City Councillors, and may include, but not necessarily be limited to: ratepayer groups/associations, other local interest and/or advocacy groups, Business Improvement Areas, professional associations, and industry experts.

As previously noted consultation can be a joint effort or coordinated with Metrolinx, depending on the range of issues and appropriateness to combine consultations.

Communication will be coordinated for the Relief Line Terms of Reference review and Public Consultation Plan development and the Metrolinx study under the umbrella of the Regional Relief Strategy.

## **4.3 Communications**

### **4.3.1 Project Website**

A project website will be developed and maintained for the duration of the project. The website will mirror face-to-face consultations at public forums. All material displayed and presented at public open houses will be posted on the study's website. It will also include any published background reports and public notices. A project specific email address will be established to provide for direct online communication between the public and the study team.

A common web portal for both the City and TTC work and the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study will be implemented to provide the public and stakeholders with easy access to all information pertaining to the development of alternative strategies for addressing overcrowding on the Yonge Subway line.

#### **4.3.2 Public and Stakeholder Meeting Consultation Summary Reports**

At this point it is proposed that summary reports be prepared for all public and stakeholder meetings, consisting of the following:

- the purpose of the meeting;
- a description of the meeting venue, format and number of attendees;
- a general description of the meeting participants and/or name(s) of the stakeholder group(s);
- notes identifying the questions raised and the responses to the questions;
- summary of recurrent themes, comments or recommended directions; and,
- documentation of presentation material.

Individual summary reports could be consolidated into a single public consultation document at the conclusion of each round of consultation, and posted on the project website.