



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Relief Line Project Assessment: Finalized Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan

Date:	May 15, 2014
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Ward:	All Wards
Reference Number:	P:\2014\ClusterB\PLN\PGMC\PG14054

SUMMARY

This report recommends a final Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan for the Relief Line Project Assessment, a study to determine the station locations and route alignment for a new rapid transit line that would connect Downtown Toronto to the Bloor-Danforth Subway (Line 2) east of the Don River. With this approval the City and TTC will jointly proceed with the Relief Line Project Assessment.

This project is required to accommodate current and future ridership demands on the Yonge Line (Line 1), increase capacity and relieve crowding at the Bloor/Yonge interchange station and, provide new transit capacity to relieve overcrowding on the surface transit network.

The Relief Line Project Assessment encompasses the environmental assessment work that must be completed in advance of initiating a Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP) for this project.

At the December 4, 2013 meeting of Planning and Growth Management Committee, staff received authority to commence Phase 1A of this work, to consult with the public on the draft study Terms of Reference and a proposed Public Consultation Plan. This consultation has been completed in coordination with the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study (YRNS) which is underway concurrently to relieve crowding on the Yonge Subway Line through a review of broader regional solutions.

A summary of public feedback from the March and April 2014 public consultation is presented along with a final Terms of Reference (Appendix A) and Public Consultation Plan (Appendix B). The report recommends approval of these guiding documents.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the final Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan presented in Appendix A and Appendix B, to guide the next phases (Phases 1B to 4) of the Relief Line Project Assessment. With this approval the City and TTC will jointly proceed with the Relief Line Project Assessment.

Financial Impact

Funding for the joint City-TTC relief line preliminary planning, project assessment and public consultation of \$4.028 million (including \$1.5 million in 2014 Cash Flow) has been included in the TTC's current and prior year's 10-Year Capital Budget and Plan under program 3.9 Buildings & Structures – Downtown Relief Line Study, category Expansion.

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

DECISION HISTORY

The Planning and Growth Management Committee at its meeting of December 4, 2013, in considering a presentation by City Planning staff on the "[Proposed Approach to Study the Relief Line Initiative](#)" (PG29.7) adopted the following motions that requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with appropriate officials, to:

- a. Undertake public consultation on the Relief Line draft Terms of Reference and a draft Public Consultation Plan, with technical support provided by Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) staff, and report back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee seeking approval of these documents in early 2014; and
- b. Undertake a process to rename the Downtown Relief Line to better reflect residents being served by the investment, and that the process include a contest to select an appropriate name for the project, as part of the consultation on the Terms of Reference.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

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...”; and
- "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 crowding 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. Conceptually, the new rapid transit line forms a “U” shape, connecting the downtown to the west and east on the Bloor-Danforth Subway, and extending further north of the Danforth Subway to the future Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

The Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study determined the section of a future Relief Line between Downtown Toronto and the Bloor-Danforth Subway east of the Don River would provide the greatest and most immediate benefit to relieving overcrowding on the Yonge Subway Line. The initial section of the Relief Line could reduce southbound transfers at Bloor-Yonge Station by approximately 30%, reduce Yonge Subway line demand by 12% and have a peak hour demand of 11,700 transit riders (based on 2031 projections). During the study, it was also determined that there is enough capacity in the west to support the projected demand, specifically on the University Subway Line south of St. George Station. In the context of relieving pressure on the Yonge Subway corridor, the east section of the Relief Line is the highest priority. 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 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 City's Official Plan, adopted by Council in 2002, does not include the Relief Line concept. 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 for approval in 2015.

COMMENTS

The status of related transportation planning initiatives are described below. City staff are working in collaboration with the TTC and Metrolinx on these initiatives. In particular, City staff are coordinating closely with the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study to ensure options that may impact both a local and regional scale 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 crowding at the Bloor/Yonge interchange station, and accommodate future demand that will occur as the result of extending the Yonge Line north to Highway 7 in York Region. Findings of the DRTES study were reported to the TTC Board and Planning and Growth Management Committee in late 2012/early 2013, respectively.

Following that reporting, the TTC has commenced further preliminary technical analysis necessary to identify and assess alignment and station location options. This work is to become part of the Relief Line Project Assessment with a Council approved public consultation process to review station location and route alignment options. The conclusions and recommendations of the Relief Line Project Assessment will be submitted to the TTC Board and City Council for consideration in early 2016.

Review of the Official Plan's Transportation Policies

The Official Plan transportation policy review, also known as the "Feeling Congested" initiative, 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 is one of 24 proposed, unfunded rapid transit projects, in addition to GO Rail expansion proposals, that are being evaluated 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 continue to be refined. Some of the preliminary results are reported 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 being undertaken in 2014. Results will be applied in the Relief Line Project Assessment and Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study to inform decision making on the recommended solution.

The technical evaluation process is being refined as a result of 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 rapid transit network review will be coming forward to the June, 2014 meeting of Planning and Growth Management Committee.

Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study

Metrolinx is currently undertaking the Yonge Relief Network Study to consider regional network options for easing crowding in the Yonge Subway corridor. Specifically this study will consider short, medium and long term solutions to crowding on the Yonge Subway Line and the overall transit network by utilizing existing infrastructure, implementing innovative policies, and studying new infrastructure.

The findings of the Yonge Relief Network Study will help to determine the need and timing of the Relief Line by analyzing GO Transit service improvements and other options that could potentially address the issue of forecast overcrowding on the Yonge line. Results of this study are expected to be known in early 2015.

City staff will be reporting the findings of the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study to the Planning and Growth Management Committee once complete. The City anticipates that Metrolinx will provide recommendations on the timing and phasing of the Relief Line at the completion of the Yonge Relief Network Study.

Other Planned 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 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 with operations staff in the weekday AM peak periods;
- 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%; and

- The TTC is currently upgrading the signal system on the Yonge Subway Line (Automatic Train Control project). This project will allow the TTC to run more trains, more frequently. Upon completion capacity will be increased by up to 25% on the line.

Phase 1A Consultation

The City Planning Division with support from the TTC conducted public engagement on the draft Terms of Reference and proposed Public Consultation Plan for the Relief Line Project Assessment during March and April of 2014.

The study Terms of Reference outlines:

- the scope of work to be undertaken;
- project timelines; and
- the deliverables for the study.

The Public Consultation Plan outlines:

- the approaches that the project team will use in order to engage the public throughout the project;
- the methods for soliciting public feedback on determining alternative designs, route alignment, and station locations for a new rapid transit line; and
- how to maximize the benefits of a new rapid transit line to local communities while improving access into Downtown Toronto.

The project team used internet/social media and traditional notification methods to advertise and promote the various channels available for public engagement in Phase 1A of the Relief Line Project Assessment including:

- Feature item on the front page of the TTC website (www.ttc.ca);
- Feature item on the front page of the City Planning Division website (www.toronto.ca/planning);
- Print ads in Metro and 24 Hours newspapers;
- Letters sent to over 100 identified stakeholder groups;
- Twitter (Metrolinx and various City Twitter handles);
- One Stop Subway Ads throughout the TTC Subway system;
- Councillor newsletters and websites in the local study area; and
- Notices delivered to local businesses along Danforth Avenue between Broadview and Greenwood Avenues.

Feedback Methods

A variety of methods were used to solicit feedback on the draft Terms of Reference and draft Public Consultation Plan for the Relief Line Project Assessment with the objective of achieving as broad a range of outreach possible in the time available. The following summarizes the details of each consultation tactic and the level of public engagement achieved:

Online Engagement

The City Planning Division developed and launched the project website “reliefline.ca” in March, 2014. The project website was developed with the objective of being the hub for emerging and ongoing project information, and features "feedback mechanisms", allowing comments and ideas to be submitted by the public. The website is divided into the following main sections:

- **The Project:** Overview of the Relief Line Project Assessment, fast facts, frequently asked questions, background documents and regional collaboration. Materials created throughout the project, for example the Phase 1A public meeting presentation and meeting summaries) have been posted in this section;
- **The Process:** Overview of the phases of the project that will be followed to determine the recommended station locations and route alignment; and
- **Get Involved:** Information about how to provide feedback, and the home for all interactive feedback tools. During Phase 1A, this section contained details about the public meetings, summaries of the draft Terms of Reference and proposed Public Consultation Plan for the project along with survey questions for each document. An online wiki was also utilized to invite input on the draft Terms of Reference. The wiki allowed members of the public to edit the technical document with the aim of making it clearer and more effective as a guiding document.

The City Planning Division also created a dedicated email address (reliefline@toronto.ca) for collecting feedback, and email list (RELIEF-LINE@lists.toronto.ca) for broadcasting information about the Relief Line Project Assessment to interested individuals.

The levels of public engagement in this consultation activity included:

- Approximately 2800 unique website visitors during the Phase 1A consultation period;
- Approximately 260 people subscribed to the email list during the Phase 1A consultation period;
- Approximately 35 responses were received on the draft Terms of Reference and proposed Public Consultation Plan;
- A total of 23 submissions provided by email during Phase 1A; and
- Approximately 80 participants registered to review and edit the draft Terms of Reference wiki.

Stakeholder Meetings

Two stakeholder meetings were held jointly with City Planning Division/TTC and Metrolinx, to provide information on the Relief Line Project Assessment and the Yonge Relief Network Study.

Over 100 identified stakeholder groups were invited to receive information and provide feedback on the consultation information and related study materials. Representatives from approximately 30 stakeholder groups attended the February 27, 2014 joint meeting. Representatives of approximately 9 stakeholder groups attended a follow up stakeholder meeting on April 24th where the staff from the City Planning Division and Metrolinx reported on the public feedback received to date and next steps.

In total, approximately 33 unique stakeholder groups attended these two sessions and 5 submissions were provided.

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held jointly with City Planning Division/TTC and Metrolinx to present material and gather public input on the Relief Line Project Assessment and Yonge Relief Network Study. The meetings were held on Saturday, April 5th at the Sheraton Centre (123 Queen Street West) and on Thursday, April 10th at Riverdale Collegiate (1094 Gerrard Street East).

A third meeting focusing on the City's Relief Line Project Assessment was held on Saturday, April 12th at the Church of the Holy Name (71 Gough Avenue).

These meetings consisted of a formal presentation that described the Relief Line Project Assessment and the Yonge Relief Network Study, and how these initiatives relate to each other. Concurrent workshop sessions focusing on each project occurred following the presentations. The Relief Line Project Assessment workshop included a detailed presentation describing the project background, draft Terms of Reference and proposed Public Consultation plan, and next steps. The presentation was followed by small group facilitated discussions. Participants were given 50 minutes to discuss and provide feedback on three questions related to the draft Terms of Reference and five questions related to the proposed Public Consultation Plan.

The Terms of Reference discussion questions from the public meeting session included:

1. How can we improve the study process or Terms of Reference?;
2. Is there any missing from the study process?; and
3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the Relief Line project study?

The Public Consultation Plan discussion questions included:

1. How do you want to be involved in the Relief Line project study process?;
2. What engagement tools would you find most useful to learn about and provide input to the study?;
3. When (time of day) should public meetings be held regarding the Relief Line project?;
4. Where should public meetings be held regarding the Relief Line project?; and
5. What online and/or social media tools would you use to provide input to the Relief Line project?

Approximately 250 people attended these events and 54 discussion workbooks were submitted from the facilitated discussion workshops.

Comments Received

The consultation for this phase of work was designed to maximize outreach and public input through a comprehensive public engagement process. All comments received from the Phase 1A consultation have been tabulated, analysed and used to inform the final Terms of Reference (Appendix A) and Public Consultation Plan (Appendix B) for the Relief Line Project Assessment.

The final Terms of Reference document, based on the draft document originally appended to the staff report to the December 4, 2013 Planning and Growth Management Committee (PG29.7), is presented in Appendix A with trackable edits (strikeout for deletions, and bolding for new text) to ensure a traceable and transparent record of changes. The final Public Consultation Plan is shown in Appendix B. This is a new document, developed based on the consultation framework contained in the staff report to the December 4, 2013 Planning and Growth Management Committee (PG29.7) and input from the Phase 1A consultation process.

A summary of comments received from the Phase 1A public engagement process follow, grouped into two broad categories: Process and Scope (i.e. related to Terms of Reference), and Consultation (i.e. related to Public Consultation Plan).

Summary of Public Comments on Process and Scope

The following comments were received and incorporated into the Terms of Reference:

1. Proceed with the Relief Line naming contest as soon as possible;
2. Explore expanding the initial study area to include the west and north sections;
3. Inventory existing and proposed infrastructure, including: existing rights of way, and hydro needs that could share the relief line corridor;
4. Include a cost-benefit analysis for each of the shortlisted alignments;
5. Commit to incorporating sustainable transportation, such as cycling and walking, into the project decision-making;
6. Include an urban planning visioning process of the study area in the project;
7. Clarify the relationship with Feeling Congested and land use planning in future communications;
8. Develop a “communication style guide” proposing authentic, confident, ambitious and timely messaging;
9. Continue to collaborate with Metrolinx, the Official Plan Review and other relevant initiatives wherever practical;

10. Liaise with Toronto Hydro and other utilities to explore the relationship between the Relief Line and other initiatives in the study area;
11. Continue with stakeholder meetings, and consider targeting them by sector;
12. Publicly share a comprehensive list of stakeholders who have been identified for inclusion or who have been involved;
13. Develop a growing FAQ, where the public can submit questions that are answered on social media and reside permanently on the project website. This could also include a glossary of transit-specific terminology;
14. Examine comparable projects in other countries to help benchmark the Relief Line project; and
15. Invite international experts to assist with the project and present at a public symposia.

The following table summarizes the public comments that were not incorporated into the Terms of Reference, and the reasons they were not incorporated:

Table 1: Public comments not incorporated into the Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Rationale for Exclusion</u>
1. Report to council with suggestions for expediting the process, including investing more resources.	A final Terms of Reference and Consultation Plan to guide work in advance of a TPAP process are intended to speed the planning process compared to traditional methods.
2. Ask TTC to report on operational ways of relieving congestion in the near term.	Near term operational measures to relieve crowding have been previously reported and are already included in the TTC capital program.
3. Expand the problem statement to include crowding on the Bloor Subway Line west of Yonge, and the Yonge Subway line north of Bloor as critical issues.	This issue is being addressed through the City's Official Plan review of transportation policies including development of a rapid transit network and priority projects.
4. Include the policy of holding no public consultations after June during election years in this document.	The City's election policies are out of scope for the Relief Line Project Assessment.

Summary of Public Comments on Consultation

The following comments were received and incorporated into the Public Consultation Plan:

1. Continue using a combination of open house and online consultation methods to engage the public;
2. Continue the use of online surveys hosted on the project website;
3. Spread project meetings out to a broader geography of the City;
4. Hold consultations on weekday evenings in community centres, civic centres or schools whenever possible;
5. Continue the use of a website dedicated to the project;
6. Use existing online tools such as Reddit or a Twitter chat using a dedicated hashtag to engage the public;
7. Translate all materials and consultation documents into various other languages, based on the area of deployment;
8. Have Twitter and Facebook serve as the backbone of the social media program with other platforms used for specific projects or events;
9. Explore online mapping opportunities, especially interactive tools;
10. Continue use of crowdsourcing tools, such as the wiki, wherever practical;
11. Hold mini-fora in various central areas within the Relief Line Project Assessment Study Area using street-teams. This could include participating in relevant meetings held by other public agencies;
12. Have street teams and/or suggestion boxes/kiosks on transit to allow members of the public who do not have internet or cannot attend meetings to contribute; and
13. Make sure the public understands the study process, including the very limited opportunity to change outcomes once in the formal "Transit Project Assessment Process" (TPAP) that follows this work.

As a result of incorporating the public's comments in the revised Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan and upon further review of the workplan given the complexity of the project it is now anticipated the schedule will be extended beyond the proposed completion date of mid 2015 to the end of 2015/early 2016. Notwithstanding this, as indicated at the public meetings every effort will be made to expedite the project.

Naming Contest for the Relief Line

Planning and Growth Management Committee at its meeting of December 4, 2013 requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, in consultation with appropriate officials, to include a process to rename the Downtown Relief Line to better reflect residents being served by the investment, and that the process include a contest to select an appropriate name for the project. In order to ensure focussed attention on the task of finalizing the Terms of Reference and Public Consultation Plan guiding documents, the public naming contest was shifted to occur in the next phase of work (Phase 1B).

NEXT STEPS

Following authority from Council to proceed with the Relief Line Project Assessment, City and TTC staff will be conducting Phase 1B in mid/late 2014. Phase 1B will include public engagement for the finalization of the problem statement and project rationale, provide a synopsis of existing and future conditions in the study area, confirm the rapid transit technology for the new line and invite the public to submit names in a naming contest for the Relief Line. It is expected various public engagement methods will be applied in this phase of work including online consultation, presentations to community groups and stakeholders as well as innovative outreach programs throughout the City (e.g. information teams positioned at transit stations, malls and events) to raise awareness and solicit input on the project and the naming contest. City and TTC staff will introduce the long list of station location and route alignment options in Phase 2 for public comment and feedback in early 2015. The recommended alignment and name for the Relief Line will be submitted to the TTC Board and City Council in 2016. The City and TTC will provide updates to the Planning and Growth Management Committee and the TTC Board respectively as the project proceeds.

City staff will continue to coordinate and collaborate with Metrolinx on the Yonge Relief Network Study throughout 2014. Metrolinx will be evaluating short, medium and long term solutions to crowding on the Yonge Subway Line and the overall transit network by utilizing existing infrastructure, implementing innovative policies, and studying new infrastructure. Analysis on potential options will be conducted throughout 2014. A recommended suite of options will be submitted to the Metrolinx board in early 2015. City staff will be reporting the findings of the Metrolinx Yonge Relief Network Study to City Council once complete.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Terms of Reference
Appendix B: Public Consultation Plan