

**Pedestrian Access to City Laneway –
Lawrence Avenue West to MacDonald Avenue**

Date:	May 27, 2016
To:	Etobicoke York Community Council
From:	Director, Public Realm Section, Transportation Services Director, Etobicoke-York District, Transportation Services
Wards:	Ward 11 – York South-Weston
Reference Number:	p:\2016\ClusterB\tra\pr\ey16009pr

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

Following requests by local residents to block pedestrian access to a laneway due to concerns about illegal and antisocial behaviours, this report advises on the advantages and disadvantages of converting existing guardrails to full fences to prevent pedestrian through traffic on the public laneway which runs north-south between Lawrence Avenue West and MacDonald Avenue, east of Ralph Street.

Reducing public through access on this laneway has the potential to reduce the rate of illegal activity now associated with pedestrian access. The advantage of closing the laneway to public access is to provide the abutting landowners with the benefits of a private lane, while being maintained by the City. The disadvantages of closing the lane include the removal of an efficient transportation link for a significant number of pedestrians between Lawrence Avenue West and MacDonald Avenue, including the local high school, Weston Road Collegiate. The closing of the lane with fencing would also be contrary to the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and may lead to situations where, as a result, the affected lanes become less safe due to limited access and visibility from the street. Once access is limited, there is also an increased likelihood that the lanes will be used for illegal parking. Finally, the addition of a chain-link or wood fence is likely to attract a variety of maintenance issues, including graffiti, garbage and weeds which will require additional City resources on an ongoing

basis. As a result, City staff do not recommend that the laneway be blocked against pedestrian use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Services recommends that Etobicoke York Community Council not approve:

1. Installing fencing across the laneway between MacDonald Avenue and Lawrence Avenue West, east of Ralph Street in order to block access to pedestrians.

Financial Impact

The cost of adding new chain-link fences is estimated to be \$3,000. In addition, the fences are likely to have ongoing maintenance costs which would have potential impacts on future operating budgets.

Funding for these costs is not included in the 2016 Operating Budget for Transportation Services.

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

DECISION HISTORY

This report was requested by Etobicoke-York Community Council in response to a motion put forward by the local Councillor.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.EY14.51>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

City staff attended a public meeting hosted by the local Councillor on February 10, 2016 to review concerns of local residents that the pedestrians utilizing the laneway were conducting illegal or antisocial activities which were affecting their sense of safety and enjoyment of their property. This meeting followed previous discussions with the community in 2008 to have the laneway lands declared surplus which, due to a lack of consensus among property owners, was unsuccessful. Residents made a further request in 2012 (with consensus) which was refused by the City due to its recent investment in the laneway reconstruction and a desire to maintain the pedestrian connectivity in the community. At the most recent meeting, area residents indicated a desire to convert the existing guardrails which block vehicles from using the laneway as a through route into a full fence in order to block all pedestrian access.

COMMENTS

Concerns about illegal or antisocial behaviours appear to be longstanding, and area residents have identified concerns about safety and security, as well as the enjoyment of their property, which they believe would be best managed by blocking all through access to the lane. The proposed placement of the fencing replaces the existing partial guardrails and is shown in Attachment 1.

Laneways in Toronto serve a variety of uses in the city's transportation network. They are principally designed to provide rear property access for local residents, but also serve as walking and cycling routes due to their low vehicle volumes and, in some cases, as shortcuts or detours between long blockfaces for all travel modes. For this reason, the subject laneway has two sets of guardrails which block vehicles from using the lane as a through route to and from Lawrence Avenue West, while permitting local residents vehicular access to their rear properties and area residents and students to walk or cycle more efficiently to their destination.

The existing laneway provides a well-used pedestrian link between Lawrence Avenue West and Macdonald Avenue. Recent pedestrian counts suggest that the majority of the pedestrians are students travelling to and from Weston Road Collegiate Institute, as well as area residents accessing transit or shopping destinations. Weston Road Collegiate Institute offers programs for local students in grades 9 to 12, as well as an International Baccalaureate program, which attracts students from a wider geographic area of the city.

The majority of pedestrian trips are during the lunch hour as shown in Table 1. If the laneway was closed to all through access, pedestrians would be required to walk either 89 metres west to Ralph Street or 229 metres east to Pine Street in order to access Lawrence Avenue West.

Table 1 – Pedestrian Counts – May 19, 2016

Time of Day	Southbound	Southbound
8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.	27	6
11:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.	115	118
3:00-4:00 p.m.	11	24

The addition of fencing which blocks through access to all modes of travel is not in keeping with the Crime Prevention Through Design (CPTED) principles which seek to reduce illegal activities by ensuring that there is natural surveillance – a design strategy that is directed at keeping intruders under observation with clear sightlines. As well, if residents are confronted with an unsafe situation in the lane, their ability to exit is also limited due to the placement of the fencing.

The installation of chainlink or wooden fencing across the lane at two locations in the lane would also block views between Macdonald Avenue and Lawrence Avenue West, and is likely to lead to a number of maintenance issues as a result. Such fencing attracts garbage and weeds, as well as graffiti which must be removed on a regular basis and has an impact on the City's annual operating budget. The City does, however, offer mural programs to deter graffiti and will often partner with local youth and the Toronto Police Services to identify and deliver these programs.

The addition of fencing along this lane is also likely to encourage illegal parking in the lane when vehicle users realize that a parked vehicle will not block access and is thus less likely to be reported for enforcement.

The net result of fencing the laneway to block all access between Lawrence Avenue West and Macdonald Avenue is to effectively remove the lane from public use and limit it to the private use of the abutting landowners. Installation of the fencing is not a guarantee that illegal or antisocial behaviours will cease as a result, but such fencing will likely require ongoing maintenance by the City. The laneway serves as a well-used passage for pedestrians and those who currently use the lane would be forced to detour west or east in order to reach their destinations.

Should Community Council decide that the laneway be closed to all through traffic, City Council approval is required. A report, with the draft by-law attached, would be submitted to Community Council at which time the public has the opportunity to speak to the matter at the same meeting.

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SIGNATURE

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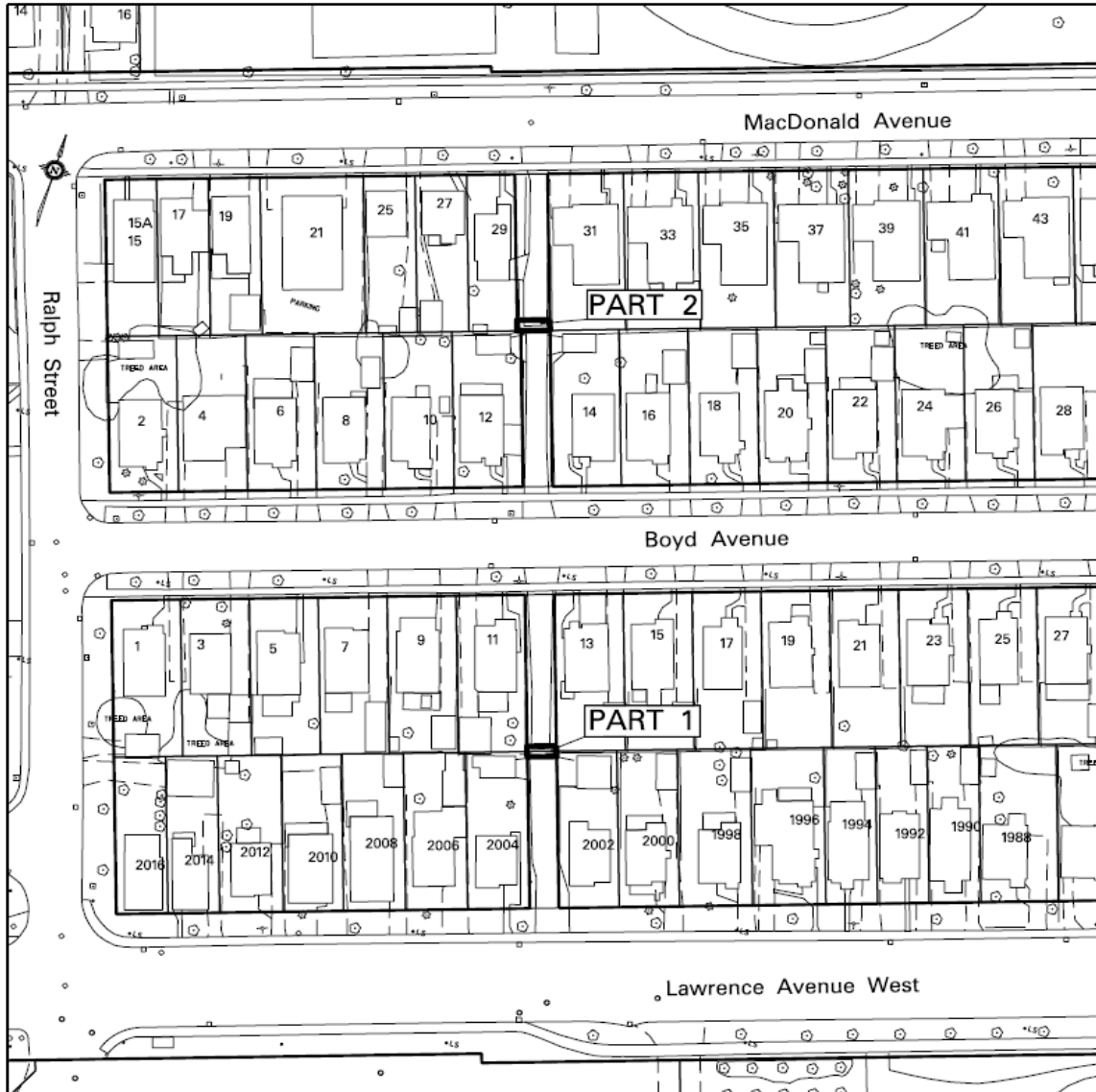
Steven T. Kodama, P.Eng.
Director, Etobicoke-York District
Transportation Services


ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Map Showing Portions of the Public Lane East of Ralph Street between
Lawrence Avenue West and MacDonald Avenue

Attachment 1

Map Showing Portions of the Public Lane East of Ralph Street between
Lawrence Avenue West and MacDonald Avenue



 <small>ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION SERVICES ENGINEERING SUPPORT SERVICES LAND & PROPERTY SURVEYS</small>	PROPERTY INFORMATION SHEET	
	CITY OWNED LAND	
	SKETCH SHOWING PORTIONS OF THE PUBLIC LANE EAST OF RALPH STREET BETWEEN LAWRENCE AVENUE WEST AND MACDONALD AVENUE	
	<small>NOTE: THIS SKETCH HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM OFFICE RECORDS, MEASUREMENTS ARE APPROXIMATE</small>	<small>WARD 11 - YORK SOUTH-WESTON DATE: MAY 19, 2016</small>
<small>CHECK BY JOHN HOUSE PREPARED BY: DWAYNE PITT</small>		