

## **King Street Transit Pilot - Additional Information on Taxis and Monitoring & Evaluation (EX 26.1)**

**Date:** July 4, 2017

**To:** City Council

**From:** General Manager, Transportation Services

**Wards:** 20 (Trinity-Spadina), 28 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale)

### **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to the direction of Executive Committee in its consideration of Item EX26.1 Proposed King Street Transit Pilot - Bathurst Street to Jarvis Street, to report directly to City Council following further consultation with representatives of the taxi industry on options to address taxi industry concerns, along with an outline of existing taxi stands and opportunities for additional taxi stands on King Street and elsewhere within the pilot area.

While a number of options are available it is recommended that no exemption be provided for taxis to the proposed through movement prohibitions within the King Street Transit Pilot area. While there could be advantages to the taxi industry of an exemption, it is anticipated that the volume of taxi traffic would have a significant impact on transit and undermine the transit-first objective of the pilot project. If a full-time exemption were to be provided to taxis, Transportation Services' view is that the impacts would be such that the pilot should not be pursued.

Subject to Council approval of the pilot project, City staff will continue to engage and work with the taxi industry on identifying opportunities to provide additional taxi stands within the pilot area to support the use of taxi services, while maintaining the functioning of King Street as intended in this transit-priority pilot project.

Additional information is included to further define the range of data that has been used to inform the planning of the proposed pilot and will form the basis of the monitoring and evaluation plan used to more fully understand and assess the benefits and impacts of the pilot project.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the proposed King Street Transit Pilot as outlined in the June 9, 2017 report to Executive Committee EX26.1 Proposed King Street Transit Pilot - Bathurst Street to Jarvis Street, without any exemption for taxis to the proposed through movement prohibitions within the pilot area.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the receipt of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On June 19, 2017, Executive Committee adopted Report EX26.1, Proposed King Street Transit Pilot - Bathurst Street to Jarvis Street, with amendments.

Executive Committee directed the General Manager, Transportation Services to consult further with the taxi industry and report directly to City Council at its meeting on July 4, 5 and 6, 2017 on options to address taxi industry concerns with the King Street Transit Pilot, including potential full-time or time of day exemption from no through movement restrictions, and/or additional spaces for cab stands or other measures to assist taxis in carrying out their role in the transportation system which are consistent with the mandate of the proposed pilot project.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX26.1>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Background**

The King Street Transit Pilot is intended to provide higher priority to the streetcars operated by the TTC on Routes 504 King and 514 Cherry. Currently, service is irregular and often slow on King Street, where approximately 20,000 vehicles and 65,000 transit passengers travel per day. Major sources of delay include traffic congestion, signal-related delay, curbside delay (parking and loading) and passenger service time (boarding and alighting).

Given that traffic congestion is a significant source of delay, the pilot intends to reduce the volume of through traffic on King Street, allowing streetcars to operate faster and more reliably during congested periods. For these reasons, the pilot design includes a requirement for traffic to turn right rather than proceeding through the majority of signalized intersections.

## **Consultation with Taxi Industry**

City staff have met with taxi industry representatives regarding the proposed pilot and to discuss taxi industry concerns. On June 5, 2017 a meeting was held with Sam Moini of the Toronto Taxi Alliance and on June 13, a meeting was held with Kristine Hubbard, Operations Manager at Back Taxi.

Following the June 19 Executive Committee meeting, on June 27, City staff met with Sam Moini, Kristine Hubbard and Sajid Mughal of the iTaxiworkers Association to discuss their request for an exemption and opportunities for additional taxi stand locations.

The taxi industry representatives indicated that they understand the objective of the pilot to improving transit service on King Street, and are requesting an exemption for taxis to the proposed through movement prohibitions within the pilot area, given that in their view, taxis operate as a form of public transit.

While taxi companies dispatch large numbers of taxis to pick-up passengers, including for accessible transportation, they also rely on cruising for hailed fares from potential customers along the street. The taxi industry is concerned that in order to cruise for hailed fares from customers along King Street, taxi vehicles would circle blocks back onto King Street if they are required to turn right at key intersections and not exempt from the proposed through movement prohibitions.

They are concerned that the pilot may limit convenient access to taxis along a corridor containing an entertainment district where there is high demand for taxis, particularly in the evening peak and late evening periods. Taxis currently comprise between 18 and 32 percent of all traffic between 7 am and 7 pm and between 10 pm and 2:30 am, can be as high as 38% in one direction on a Friday evening.

Staff discussed various options for exemption with the taxi industry representatives. While the taxi industry representatives maintained their position with a request for a full exemption, it was acknowledged that any exemption option would be preferable to the taxi industry than no exemption.

## **Options to Address Taxi Request for Exemption**

Options to address the taxi industry's request for an exemption to the proposed through movement prohibitions within the King Street Transit Pilot area are outlined below along with the pros and cons of each.

The options considered are:

- Pilot as proposed - no exemption
- Full exemption for taxis
- Time based exemption for taxis - late evening/overnight
- Split pilot - no exemption for a period of time (i.e. 6 months or one year), followed by an exemption for a subsequent period of time (i.e. 6 months or one year)

## **Pilot as Proposed**

Transit would be prioritized by discouraging non-local vehicle traffic on King Street, limiting the number of private vehicles competing for limited road space with streetcars. There would be no east-west through vehicle movements allowed along King Street at key intersections in the pilot area: Bathurst Street, Portland Street, Spadina Avenue, Peter Street, University Avenue, Yonge Street, Church Street, and Jarvis Street. Transit vehicles, bicycles, emergency services (police, fire and paramedics), and road maintenance vehicles (i.e. street sweepers) would be allowed to travel east-west through these intersections.

### *Pros*

- Designed to achieve the transit first objective, maximizing transit speed and reliability
- Clarity for compliance from private vehicles - same restrictions for all vehicles except transit

### *Cons*

- Taxis can't cruise along King Street for hailed fares to the same extent
- Taxis may circulate blocks to cruise for hailed fares, increasing traffic movements in the area

## **Full Exemption for Taxis**

This option would provide taxis with a full exemption to the proposed through movement prohibitions within the King Street Transit Pilot area, on par with public transit, emergency services and road maintenance vehicles.

### *Pros*

- Taxis can cruise along King Street for hailed fares - convenient access for customers to hail taxis
- Less right turn movements at intersections

### *Cons*

- Likely to have significant impact on transit speed and reliability and undermine the transit first objective of the pilot
- Reduced compliance / increased confusion - drivers of private vehicles would see taxis going through and think they can go through as well

## **Time Based Exemption - Late Evening / Overnight**

This option would provide taxis with an exemption to the proposed through movement prohibitions during a specific evening / overnight time period (i.e. 10 pm to 5 am) when demand for taxis is high. Note: a time based exemption could also be considered for all vehicles but while overall levels of traffic are lower in these periods, they are still significant.

### *Pros*

- Taxis can cruise for hailed fares along King Street during their busy evening / nighttime period
- Helps dissipate the significant people congestion resulting from evening and nightlife activity along King Street, particularly between John Street and Bathurst Street

### *Cons*

- Impacts on transit speed and reliability during the exemption time where percentage of taxi traffic is currently high and transit speed is currently slow (average ranges from 6.8 km - 4.6 km per hour between 10 pm and 2 am)
- Add complexity to the operations, potentially causing confusion for general motorists and taxi operators resulting in reduced compliance

## **Split Pilot**

This option would provide taxis with no exemption to the proposed through movement prohibitions for one phase (i.e. 6 months or one year), followed by an exemption for a subsequent phase (i.e. 6 months or one year). One year would be preferred to enable direct comparison of data.

### *Pros*

- If a one-year period is selected, it would enable the impacts of an exemption for taxis to be more easily compared to no exemption for taxis

### *Cons*

- Same as Full Exemption and Time Based Exemption
- If the first phase is working well, there is a risk of reducing its effectiveness
- If a six-month option is selected for each phase, direct comparison of the two options would be difficult due to seasonal variations (weather, construction, variations in traffic levels)

## **Taxi Stands**

In the proposed pilot area there are currently six designated taxi stands with 34 spaces, available for taxis to wait for passengers outside of the peak periods (7:00 to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.).

City staff are actively working with taxi industry representatives to identify locations for additional taxi stands within the pilot area based on their knowledge of high-demand locations. Subject to Council approval of the pilot project, City staff will continue to work with the taxi industry to provide additional taxi stands both along King Street as well as on other streets within the pilot area. It is anticipated that the number of spaces at taxi stands along King Street within the pilot area could be doubled.

## Monitoring & Evaluation

As outlined in the below table, a wide range of data has been used to inform the planning of the proposed pilot.

<b>Existing and Ongoing Data Collection</b> <b>Sources gathered to date that have informed the Pilot thus far, and that will continue to be tracked as the Pilot progresses</b>	
<b>Transit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel times, speed and variability tracked by GPS data and field surveys for King St. streetcars</li> <li>Ridership counts gathered by automated counters and field surveys for King St. streetcars</li> </ul>	<b>Vehicles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel times and speed gathered from both GPS and Bluetooth for King St. as well as parallel routes.</li> <li>Traffic volumes collected from field surveys and automatic counters for King St. as well as parallel routes.</li> <li>Turning movement counts from intersections throughout the study area, gathered by video counts and field surveys.</li> <li>Driveway access investigations conducted via field surveys.</li> </ul>
<b>Curbside Usage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking of patterns regarding legal parking, legal loading, and illegal activities on King St., gathered by video counts and field surveys</li> </ul>	<b>Cycling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volumes - collected by video counts and field surveys for King Street and parallel routes</li> </ul>
<b>Taxi Operations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volumes on King St. during the day and early evening, gathered via video counts and field surveys</li> </ul>	<b>Pedestrians</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volumes - collected by video counts and field surveys for King St.</li> </ul>
<b>Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of collisions throughout the study area, based on collision data provided by the Toronto Police Service</li> </ul>	<b>Parking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-street space utilization trends</li> <li>Off-street space utilization trends</li> </ul>

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan is being developed jointly by the Toronto Transit Commission, City Planning, Transportation Services, and the Toronto Parking Authority. The pilot's monitoring and evaluation plan will provide a means for responding to operational issues during the pilot and a method for evaluating the overall success of the Pilot.

Should the pilot project be implemented, Downtown traffic operations would be regularly monitored to ensure that the surrounding transportation network is working as effectively as possible.

This will involve monitoring of not only King Street but also parallel routes such as Queen Street, Richmond Street, Adelaide Street, Wellington Street, and Front Street as well as intersecting north-south streets. Data collection methods will vary by the survey type, but will include automatic or video counts, field investigations, use of GPS vehicle tracking (automated TTC vehicle location data and vehicle speed and travel times collected from Bluetooth sensors or other third-party sources such as Here data) as well as perception surveys. The data collected and analyzed through the pilot will be updated as frequently as practical, based on complexity and cost of the collection methods. A public facing dashboard is being developed to track certain metrics that may be of interest to the public.

Modifications to signal timings, turning restrictions and time of day curbside regulations would be made, as needed, to optimize the transportation network surrounding the pilot.

An Economic Impact Monitoring Study will also be undertaken during the pilot. Discussions are underway with BIAs and non-BIA businesses along King Street to develop the scope of work for analyzing, monitoring and measuring key economic metrics along King Street during the pilot project.

As requested through a motion approved by the TTC Board on June 15, a report will be brought to the TTC Board in Q4 2017 outlining how the success of the pilot project will be determined.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Barbara Gray  
General Manager, Transportation Services

## **ATTACHEMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - King St. Pilot Project Dashboard - Mockup