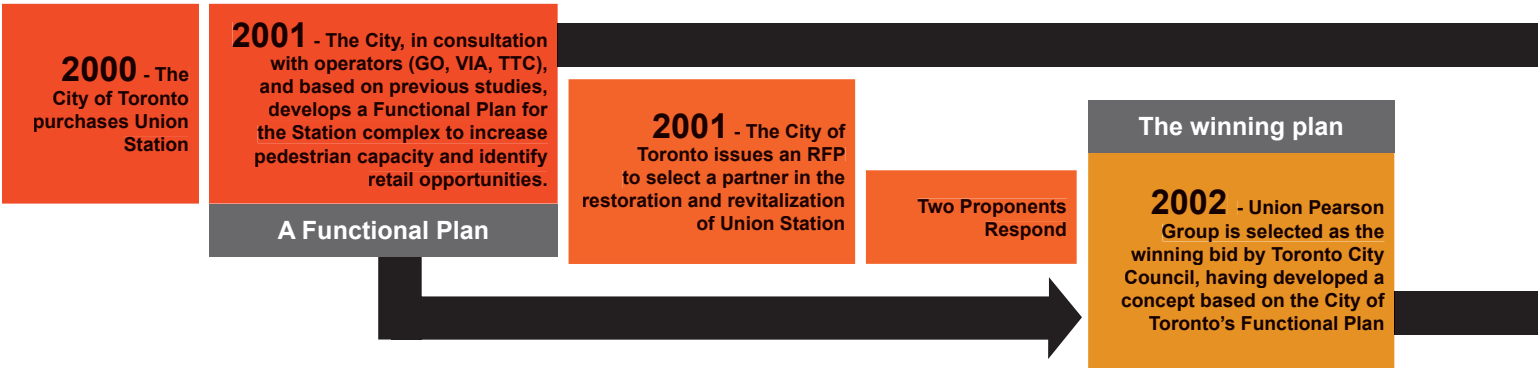


A photograph of a grand, arched train station interior. The scene is filled with people walking away from the camera towards a large, brightly lit archway. On the right, there are service counters with staff and a queue. A large clock is visible on the left side of the archway. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, historic transit hub.

Part 2

PEER REVIEW



2.1 Towards a Master Plan

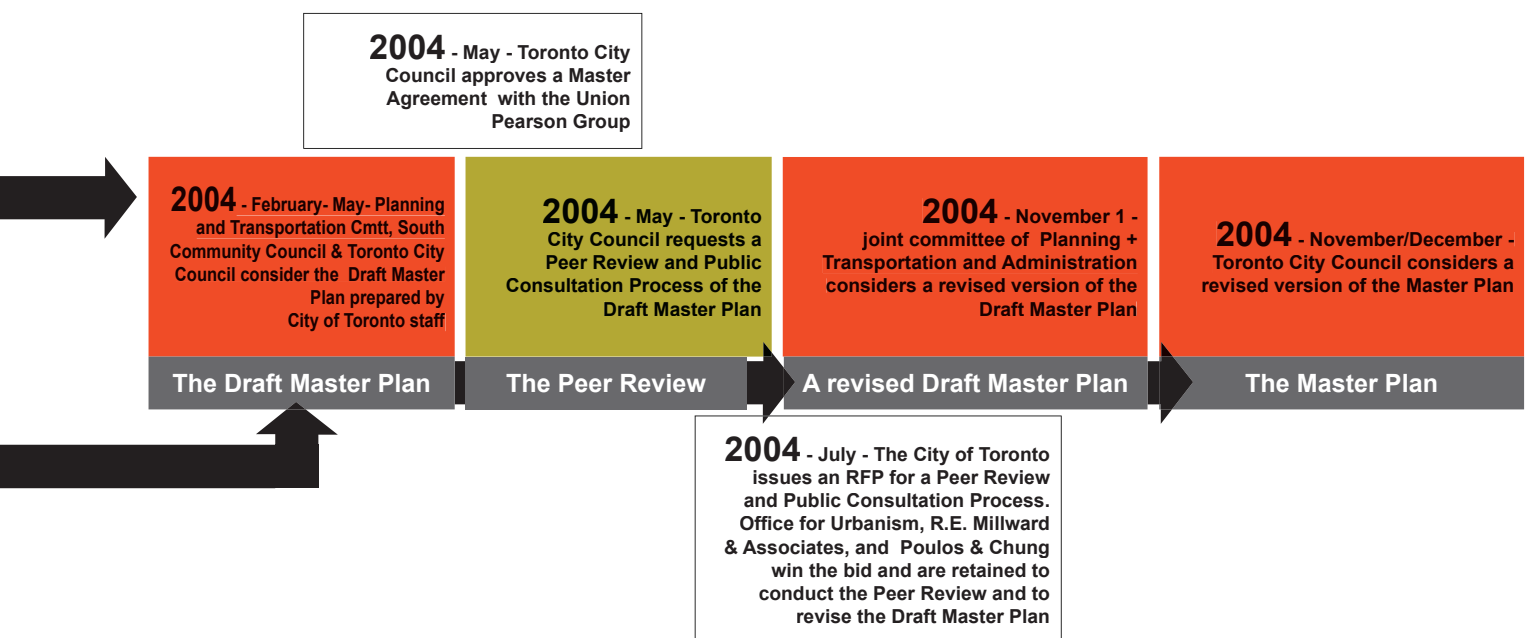
As a high level “principles” document, the Master Plan for Union Station must seek to provide the direction and guidance necessary to ensure that key initiatives for the Station are realized:

- Its maintenance as a multi-modal transportation hub
- The preservation of its unique heritage components
- Its overall revitalization

As objectives related to the restoration and operation of the Station unfold, the pursuit of these initiatives becomes imperative.

The Master Plan must also provide principle statements that clearly protect the public interest in the use, operation and future of the Station. By purchasing the building, the City of Toronto took the first step to ensure the Station would remain a public asset. The Master Plan provides a further opportunity to entrench transportation uses and public objectives.

The following description of events outlines major turning points in Union Station’s process towards this Master Plan. These events are summarized graphically in the timeline below:



2000

Following the acquisition of the Union Station building in August 2000, the City of Toronto finally controlled the development rights above the Station complex. To maximize the revenue potential and to rejuvenate Union Station, an infusion of capital and quality management would be required. It was determined that the City of Toronto would pursue a private-public partnership. In December 2000, the City of Toronto issued a Request for Expressions of Interest to restore, develop and operate Union Station.

2001

Working with the transportation operators, the City of Toronto updated the 1991 Pedestrian Circulation Plan and developed a Functional Plan, to be incorporated into the Request for Proposals. The objective was to increase transportation capacity within the Station and to identify where retail development could be accommodated.

In March 2001, Toronto City Council pre-qualified three groups to participate in a subsequent RFP. In December 2001, proposals were received from LP Heritage + Union Station Consortium and Union Pearson Group Inc (the third proponent did not submit).

2002

At the Toronto City Council meeting held in July 2002, Council selected Union Pearson Group as the preferred proponent and directed staff to commence negotiation of a Master Agreement to restore, develop and operate Union Station.

Council confirmed that the remainder of the RFP process was to be conducted in public, save and except for financial, legal and related details of the negotiations that were required to be confidential to protect the City of Toronto's financial interest and the legal rights of the proponents.

2003

In February 2003 City Council referred a series of issues related to the RFP process to the Honourable Coulter Osborne to review and report back to Council, given that questions had arisen about the fairness of the process.

In May 2003 Justice Osborne presented his report on the Union Station RFP process to Toronto City Council. In short, the conclusion was that although the evaluation process was not perfect, it was determined to be, on balance, fair to both proponents.

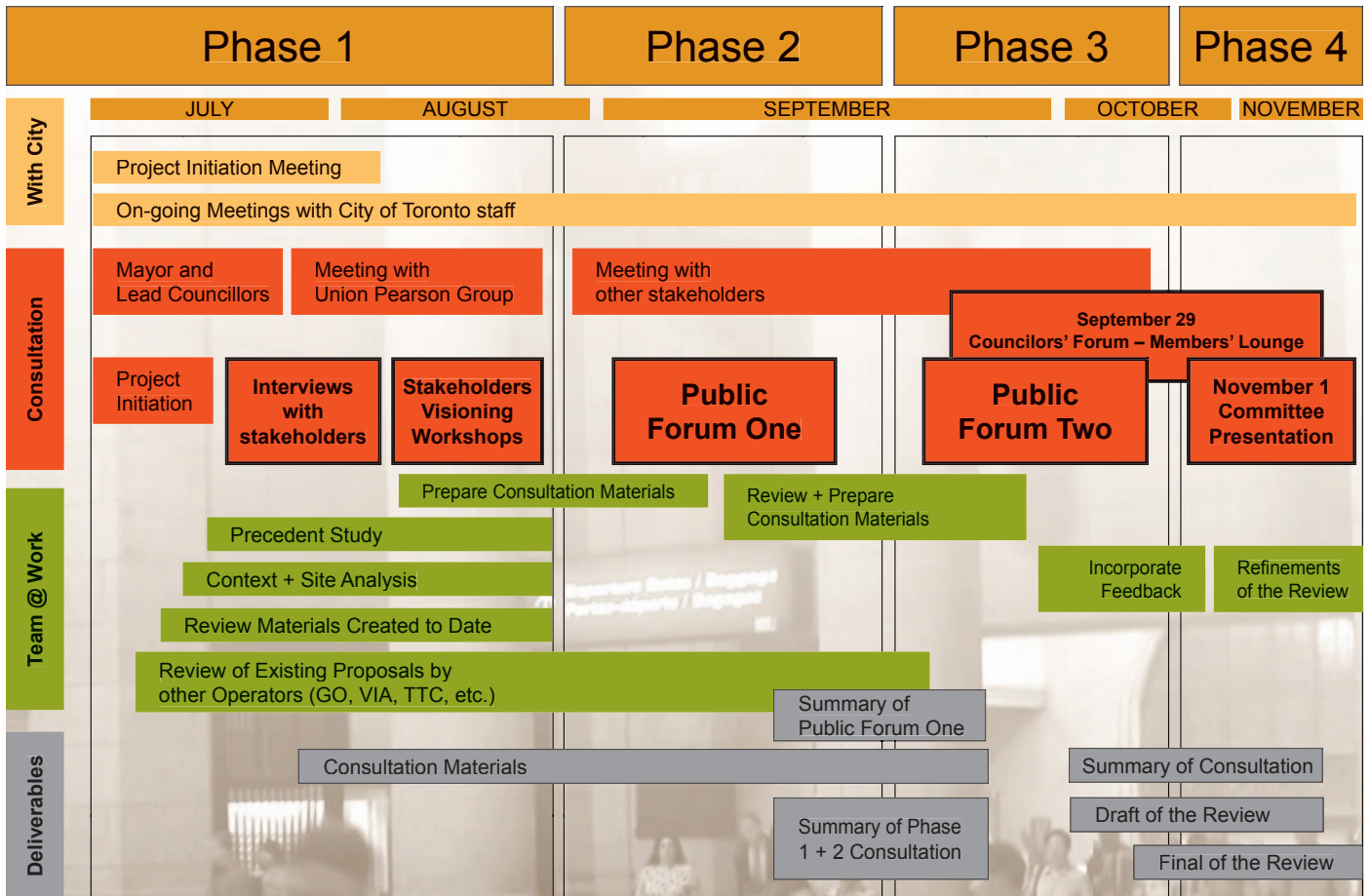
2004

In January 2004 a Draft Master Plan was recommended by City of Toronto staff to City Council. The Draft Master Plan (2004), which has been reviewed as part of the preparation of this document, is a compilation of a number of previously approved planning and heritage documents produced by independent consultants and government agencies with respect to Union Station.

In May 2004, Toronto City Council approved a Master Agreement with Union Pearson Group and requested an independent peer review of the Draft Master Plan. Finalization of the Master Agreement with Union Pearson Group is contingent on the approval of a Union Station Master Plan.

In June 2004, the City of Toronto issued a request for proposals (RFP) from qualified professional consulting firms to conduct a public consultation process and Peer Review of the existing Draft Master Plan (2004), and to work with City of Toronto staff to create a revised draft Union Station Master Plan.

This document is the outcome of the Public Consultation Process and Peer Review conducted from July – November 2004, in response to Council's request.



The Work Program Chart above summarizes the process undertaken by the consultant team as part of the Peer Review of the Union Station Draft Master Plan.

2.2 The Peer Review

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Whereas typically a Peer Review process is an attempt to generate an independent professional opinion that identifies key modifications to a study, the review process for the Master Plan for Union Station has been considerably more substantive, involving an extensive public consultation process, the inclusion of additional sections, and the rewriting of the previous draft. The review unfolded in the following phases:

Phase One: Reconnaissance through a site and context analysis, stakeholder interviews, a precedent analysis, review of existing policies, meetings with City of Toronto staff and Councillors, and two Stakeholder Visioning Workshops (with the Union Station Revitalization Public Advisory Group and with the Save Union Station Committee).

Phase Two: Preparation, presentation, and summary of Public Forum One. This involved assimilating the ideas, feedback and reports culled during Phase One.

Phase Three: Preparation, presentation, and summary of Public Forum Two. Since the material for this second Public Forum included making recommendations for the revised Master Plan, this phase demanded generating a first cut of the materials to be contained within the Master Plan.

Phase Four: Feedback from the second Public Forum has been used to refine the Master Plan. Meetings have been held with City of Toronto staff and councillors for further input. The Master Plan has been redesigned and rewritten.

Extensive Public Consultation

Since the City of Toronto purchased Union Station in 2000, numerous open meetings of Committees and Council on Union Station have been held. In November 2002, the Administration Committee formed a Councillors' Reference Group to further engage the public.

This group held two key public events - an evening session at Metro Hall in November 2002 with 200 people in attendance. Presentations were made followed by a question and answer session, and an opportunity was provided for participants to make deputations. The second event was a Saturday afternoon forum at St. Lawrence Hall held in January 2003. At this session, the key stakeholders related to Union Station were present, including GO, VIA and the TTC, and transportation issues were the primary topic of discussion. Approximately 150 people attended this event.

In December 2002, the City of Toronto and the Union Pearson Group have also placed a series of panels in the Great Hall at Union Station, with comment cards, outlining the proposed redevelopment concept.



Stakeholder workshops

Toronto City Council determined that a Public Advisory Group, created in January 2003, should be involved in the revitalization process, and confirmed that its role should continue throughout the lease term. A workshop with the Union Station Revitization Public Advisory Group was held on August 12, 2004 with respect to the Peer Review of the Master Plan for Union Station.



Stakeholder workshops

Despite this elaborate engagement on a variety of issues related to the Union Station, as the Draft Master Plan for Union Station was developed in late 2003, there were limited opportunities for the public to comment. It should be noted that the Public Advisory Group, which represents a range of organizations - Transport 2000 Canada, Downtown Office Towers, Toronto Pedestrian Committee, Toronto Railway Historical Association, Toronto Board of Trade, Transport 2000 Ontario, South East Downtown Economic Revitalization Initiative, St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA, St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association – was actively involved in reviewing the Draft Master Plan.

There remained a perception, however, that it was not possible to comment on the contents of the Plan. As such, a Public Consultation Process - not unlike one that typically unfolds throughout a generation of a master plan - was requested by Council to be an integral part of the Peer Review.



Stakeholder workshops

Towards this end, targeted individual interviews and small focus groups were held with operators, key land owners, interest groups, and members of the public. The objective was to gain a wide array of in-depth perspectives from key stakeholders with a vested interest in the use, operation, and design of the Station complex. To begin, a brief introduction to the Draft Master Plan and the planning process for its review were presented. Representatives from GO Transit, VIA Rail, the TTC, the proposed air-rail link to Pearson International Airport, the inter-city bus operators, taxi operators, Transport Canada, the Union Pearson Group, and City of Toronto staff (in addition to those directing the study), were consulted. A concise summary of stakeholder interviews was provided at Public Forum One.

Two Stakeholder Visioning Workshops were held on separate occasions with members of the Union Station Revitalization Public Advisory Group and the Save Union Station Committee. Workshop objectives included identifying opportunities and constraints, and for the consultant team to test ideas, corroborate the analysis, and expand on the issues. Particular consideration was given to ensuring that the Master Plan is integrated and coordinated, and responsive to its immediate environs surrounding the Station complex.



Stakeholder workshops

These workshops involved an initial PowerPoint presentation, with the majority of time spent in active break-out groups, discussing the Draft Master Plan (Jan, 2004). A concise summary of the stakeholder Visioning Workshops was provided at Public Forum One.

The emphasis in the Public Forums, both held in September 2004, was on producing

the highest quality graphic materials in order to lay out the planning context in as easily understandable a manner possible, and to better illuminate the policies of the Draft Master Plan (Jan, 2004), the evaluations of the Peer Review process, and the proposed modifications to the Plan. The consultant team spoke with participants, gathering ideas and concerns, and advancing the concepts through discussion. A presentation was made at both forums, and questions and deputations were considered. All participations were asked to sign-in, and to fill out a comment sheet that were later compiled and used by the project team when evaluating and refining the Master Plan. Over 300 people participated in the Public Forums.

Issues Pertaining To Escalators, Platforms and Access to the Great Hall

Background

The magnitude of GO Transit passenger flow demands that must be accommodated on a daily basis are the crux of the issue. Today, the daily demand is in excess of 130,000 passengers, and is forecast to double within the planning horizon period. Given these growing passenger demands, the overriding operational requirements to accommodate the movement of pedestrians and passengers in the immediate and longer-term within the Station complex are clear. GO Transit has developed a program, in consultation with its public agencies, stakeholders, and partners aimed at acomodating this demand. Some specific elements of this program that have been raised in the Master Plan public consultation are addressed in the following:

Escalators

GO Transit rail operations are fully accessible today. Currently elevator access is provided to serve each track with accessible service. Therefore some platforms do not require an elevator. In the future, in the event of double berthing, two elevators to serve a track will be required.

The vision/objective for GO rail operations is to optimize the width, location and number of staircases on all platforms to achieve platform clearance requirements. This provides for maximum ease and shortest time for passengers to embark or disembark a train. In effect, an entire train can be loaded or unloaded in a matter of minutes. The staircases enable passengers to maintain a constant rate of movement in a safe and efficient manner. Since at least two passengers can walk comfortably shoulder to shoulder up or down a staircase, a constant flow and maximum available capacity is maintained. In this instance, the platform should be understood to act not as a waiting area, but as an interim step that facilitates entering and exiting trains.

This maximum available capacity is not maintained with escalators. This is evidenced by people using the right side of the escalator to ride the escalator, while people on the left side walk upwards. Two people very rarely ride shoulder to shoulder on an escalator, hence the available capacity is never fully utilized. It is not prudent to introduce facilities that would reduce the available capacity to accommodate passenger demands.



Public Forum 1



Public Forum 1



Public Forum 2



Public Forum 2

It is important to note that GO Transit has identified significant safety and operational concerns with escalators. From a safety perspective, escalators could potentially deliver passengers to an area where an emergency situation exists. From a maintenance perspective, escalators are prone to breakdown and must be frequently taken out of service for maintenance and repair - causing further disruptions to passengers.

The current number of steps in each staircase is not overly onerous. In fact, the number of stairs are similar to the numbers contained in virtually every inter-regional rail service in North America.

Opportunities to introduce escalators to the platforms could be revisited in the future. Any future decisions on escalator feasibility would be based upon passenger capacity needs, safety, operational requirements or jointly with technology changes.

Platforms

GO Transit is currently undertaking extensive improvements to the signals, tracks, switching controls and mechanisms as well as platforms at Union Station and along its rail corridor.

Platform widths now and in the future have been determined to have the ability to safely and efficiently accommodate all existing and forecast passenger flow demands.

As a result of the expanded concourse and platform improvement plans, passengers will be able to board and disembark GO trains from doors located on both sides of the passenger rail car, thereby increasing effective platform width significantly.

Great Hall

An objective of the Master Plan process has been to explore ways to increase the number of commuters and travellers directed through the Great Hall. One option involves the dead-ending of trains and the implementation of a central pedestrian spine at the track level, such that more passengers exit and enter through the Great Hall.

From a passenger operations perspective, a centrally located pedestrian spine accessing the Great Hall would be problematic. Most obvious, it is unreasonable to expect GO rail passengers to potentially walk along the entire length of a 10-unit train to reach the central spine to access the Great Hall. Many passengers also transfer to TTC service and access the PATH system. This would create additional vertical transfer issues and likely impact on the heritage requirements established for the Great Hall.

The proposed Master Plan embraces the historical layout of the Station complex as a benefit to movement. Union Station was designed as a through rail operations facility.

Through rail operations capability allows for the following opportunities:

- The ability to interline GO trains. The interlining capability allows greater flexibility in scheduling and allocation of equipment during regular service hours and to respond to disruptions. Greater efficiency and improved schedule adherence is achieved;
- Increases the passenger carrying capacity of each individual rail line within Union Station;
- Increases train frequency and level of service on virtually every GO rail line serving the GTA;
- Allows future expansion of GO rail lines serving new areas of the GTA.

The Rewriting of the Previous Draft Master Plan

At the outset of the Peer Review, and pending the assessments of the consultant team and input from the public, it was difficult to assess the extent to which the Draft Master Plan (Jan, 2004) would need to be modified. It has subsequently become clear that while the key principles underpinning the Draft Master Plan are strong and valid, they need to be rearticulated and presented in a more comprehensive format, with details and images that add clarity, facilitate interpretation and implementation.

Additional Components

Additions have been made in the following areas:

- Four Big Moves have been identified and supported with visuals, such that the key components of the Master Plan are explicit;
- a greater level of detail has been added to the principles outlined in the Draft Master Plan to provide more direction for future development of the Station;
- extensive consideration has been given to the articulation of the urban context of the Station, and the ways in which public realm improvements ought to accompany its revitalization. Specifically, a design concept has been generated to create a Front Street Plaza and to better recognize the South Façade of the station;
- high-level policies have been added that seek to address the long-term governance and funding of the Station.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW OF THE PEER REVIEW

The following chart is designed to provide a brief overview, at a high level, of the key assessments and evaluations that are an outcome of the Public Consultation Process and Peer Review for Union Station. The intent has been to trace the source of the recommendations that are further articulated in the context of this Master Plan.

existing condition

current Draft Master Plan

Context + Vision

How does the current Draft Master Plan articulate what the Station should be within the downtown and the City of Toronto? Does it get it right?

- heavy congestion characterizes movement during rush hour, in part due to a lack of appropriate pedestrian routes
- heritage features are in need of restoration
- opportunity exists to improve movement by redesigning underutilized space

- vision is scattered throughout the document; minimal reference to context
- identifies how the use of the Station has changed to encompass a broader inter-modal function that is more 'transit' than 'travel' oriented
- links the need for redevelopment with anticipated increases in GO ridership, and the need to pursue heritage restoration
- anticipates the Station will need to become a more permeable facility

Transportation

Does the current Draft Master Plan ensure that the Station will become a thriving multi-modal hub that can accommodate projected increases in ridership? Does it meet functional requirements for trains, buses, cars, bicycles, loading and servicing?

- the Station currently maintains transportation functions as primary, although improvements can be made to operations
- operators have plans to improve functional requirements - these requirements have been consolidated by the City of Toronto in a Functional Plan for the Station

- policies and objectives contained in the current Draft Master Plan are based on the Pedestrian Circulation Plans and principles and on the Functional Plan of the City of Toronto, and strives to meet the needs of operators as identified by operators through a collaborative planning process

Uses

Are all uses, and user needs, considered? Are there gaps in the current Draft Master Plan? Is there an appropriate balance of uses proposed?

- key transportation uses: GO (rail + bus), VIA Rail, and TTC
- retail uses include food and services & some informal retail (flea market style) in the Great Hall and the GO concourse
- some areas of the Station, such as below the Great Hall and the area identified for a future GO concourse, are poorly used - the Great Hall is underutilized by passengers
- the GO concourse is somewhat chaotic and aesthetically unpleasant

- promotes policies to protect transportation uses in the Station
- allows for the conversion of underutilized spaces to improve pedestrian movement and to increase retail, services, amenity and other space (including a hotel)
- identifies the need for improved multi-modal connections

Pedestrian Circulation

Does the plan articulate a simplified and porous pedestrian circulation system? If not, how can this best be achieved?

- currently, during peak periods, parts of the Station are at capacity
- counter flow is a significant problem, whereby it is difficult to move with ease against the dominant movement stream
- conflicts occur between commuters (primarily GO & the TTC) and travellers who are less familiar with the Station (VIA)

- proposes a pedestrian circulation plan that is based on increasing access east-west, north-south & vertically throughout the Station
- identifies key interventions that are necessary to maintain and improve pedestrian flow, including the addition of an animated space below the central concourse to allow for north-south connections to surrounding environs
- proposes the creation of a west concourse area to disperse GO passengers to both sides of the Station

Heritage

Does the current Draft Master Plan sufficiently address/negotiate heritage issues? What are the key outstanding heritage issues?

- the Station is in a state of disrepair
- interventions prior to 2000, such as the signage throughout the Station, have not conformed to Beaux-Arts principles

- provides some historical overview
- references extensive policy documents that provide the regulatory framework for interventions in the Station
- identifies principles to guide heritage restoration, and identifies additional/outstanding studies that are necessary to further inform heritage interventions

Design

Does the current Draft Master Plan propose appropriate design features/approaches? What needs to be improved upon?

- the Station is designed in the grand manner of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, although certain elements of this design have been degraded through subsequent interventions

- recommends maintaining this design, emphasizing classical details, and rational, ordered planning
- provides some specific design details as per the Union Pearson Group proposal, such as covering the moats with a glass canopy and adding stairs at the east and west ends of the moats
- recommends that mandatory design guidelines must be established by the operator to direct all future tenant work
- Beaux-Arts Civic Design Quality is articulated as a planning principle

**comments on the current
Draft Master Plan**

- needs to be strengthened to better identify the role that the Station plays in regional and national context
- needs to have stronger statements regarding the importance of the Station to the city, as a multi-modal hub, a gateway, a link to the Waterfront, and as a catalyst
- needs to better contextualize the Station in relation to its environs and an appropriate planning horizon

- the principles related to transportation as a priority within the Station need to be further explained and illustrated
- some concerns that the waiting areas for VIA passengers are not sufficient
- has several outstanding issues, including design and operation for bicycle needs and the resolution of access to loading and servicing

- strong policy statements are needed to ensure that transportation functions and related movement and wayfinding for passengers is not compromised for broader revitalization objectives
- public spaces need to be better protected for public use

- there may be an opportunity for a key connection to the north-west PATH system, which would provide passengers with an alternate underground connection to the Station. This may be especially relevant with the new west concourse.

- an additional level of detail is required related to the heritage background documents that inform the regulatory context (e.g. a Historic Structures Report)

- addresses design issues well, and makes important recommendations to ensure a high quality of civic design for the future

recommendations

- policy recommendations be made in relation to positioning the importance of the Station in relation to regional and national transport
- in the introduction to the plan, the context of the Station be discussed in detail, identifying the role it plays in relation to the City of Toronto
- policy statements be clarified with respect to ensuring strong links between the Station and its context, and a vision for the revitalization of the public realm in the vicinity of the Station be added to the plan

- existing principles related to transportation planning be consolidated and restructured, including additional objectives that ensure transportation needs remain paramount
- identification of issues in need of resolution (i.e. loading and servicing)
- identification of additional transportation-related studies

- policy statements be added with respect to ensuring that transportation uses remain primary
- policy statements be added to ensure that short-term uses do not impede future transportation needs
- a policy statement be added to convey the need to negotiate and balance uses

- planning principles related to pedestrian movement be reordered and expanded upon
- to develop a pedestrian plan and identify new infrastructure (e.g. exploring the feasibility of creating a north-west PATH connection)

- additional policy related to heritage be brought forward from existing documents to further clarify the depth of analysis completed to date

- design policies be reordered for clarity
- a process be recommended for the further study and design of spaces within and beyond the Station, and how the Station interfaces with its context

