

TORONTO

City of Toronto/Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Front Street Extension Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Design Study

Meeting Minutes

Public Open House #1

(June 22, 2002)

**Public Open House #1
Saturday June 22, 2002
Trinity Community Centre
155 Crawford Street
10:00 – 12:45 p.m.**

Approximately 90 stakeholders attended this event.

1.0 Welcome

Councillor Pantalone welcomed everyone to the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski also welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.0 Introduction and Presentation

Helen Noehammer (*Project Manager, City of Toronto*) thanked all participants for attending the meeting. Helen made reference to the comment forms included in the handout distributed to all participants and asked that they be filled out and submitted to the Toronto Works and Emergency Services Department by July 12th, 2002.

Helen Noehammer proceeded to give a presentation on the Front Street Extension Class Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Design.

3.0 Question and Answer Session

A participant expressed their concern over the estimated cost of the Front Street Extension as outlined in the Front Street Extension and Interchange fact sheet included in the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation's (TWRC's) handout. The participant felt that the funds might be put to better use on other projects such as the extension of the current subway line or more funding to public transit in general. The participant felt that the extension of Front Street mainly benefited motorists traveling on the Gardiner Expressway.

- **Helen Noehammer** explained that the Front Street Extension Project was part of a larger plan to expand and improve the Toronto Waterfront road network. This plan included improvements to public transit.
- **John Sutherns** (*MRC, Transportation Engineering Consultants*) agreed that the plan works to accommodate all groups including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- **Councillor Pantalone** commented on the problems inherent in the current state of the City grid system. There is a shortage of city streets that extend in north-south and east-west directions for any great distance. By extending the City's grid system, one of the aims of this project, a more efficient transportation system, will be achieved.

A participant commented that they observed many obvious positive benefits from this extension project for commuters travelling into and out of the city. However, the participant felt that there were few benefits to be reaped from this project for local residents. The participant was also concerned with the possibility that more vehicle

traffic would be created along King Street if the Front Street Extension were to be implemented.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that there was not enough detailed information yet available as to how local traffic would be affected as the study is still in its early stages. However, she stated that local residents could expect to benefit from improvements such as additional access, sidewalks, extensive greenery and bicycle lanes.

A participant expressed concern over the construction of retaining walls, which the participant felt, would be vandalized with graffiti, thereby creating an eyesore. The participant suggested that a great deal of landscaping and greenery was needed instead.

- **Helen Noehammer, Councillor Pantalone and Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski** agreed and thanked the participant for their suggestion and indicated that landscaping would be included in the plan.

A participant requested information on the locations where the extension of Front Street would be elevated above ground. The participant was concerned that the underpass of the North-West Rail Corridor west of Bathurst Street would conflict with the physical environment such as by causing water problems. The participant suggested that an overpass be constructed instead.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that this suggestion had been examined in an earlier study and that the decision had been made to construct an underpass in large part to minimize intrusion into the community.
- **Councillor Pantalone** stated that the underpass would be more suitable for the area keeping in mind the visual impact on Fort York. The cost of the underpass and the overpass had been identified as being similar during the earlier study.

A participant questioned how the construction of the Front Street Extension fit into the total improvement being made to the waterfront area. The participant felt that there is a disconnect between aims to dismantle the Gardiner Expressway and beautify the city as a whole, and on the other hand, to construct new roads. The participant felt that the construction and improvement of roads created incentives for the public to drive instead of taking public transit. This would have the result of increasing traffic. In addition, the participant felt that construction of Front Street Extension would be a waste of monetary resources that could be invested in other long-term projects.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that the Waterfront Plan is intended to reduce the capacity of the Gardiner/Lakeshore corridor and to compensate for this loss in the Front Street corridor. The overall Waterfront roadway capacity is not planned to be increased but maintained at current levels.
- **Councillor Pantalone** added that the Front Street Extension was just one project in the midst of a larger scheme for improvement. The City of Toronto is currently facing problems relating to urban sprawl. The aim of Official Plan is to improve on the current grid system and to accommodate population growth in a manner that is environmentally sensitive.

A participant who is an employee at Canada Bread Company had concerns about the impact of the Extension on their place of business located in the Fraser Avenue-Mowat Avenue vicinity.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that discussions were planned between the City and the Canada Bread plant.

A participant asked whether the expropriation of existing buildings or land was required in order to accommodate the construction of the Front Street Extension. The participant was also concerned over the impact on traffic levels if Front Street were to be connected to Dufferin St.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that some property was required to construct the extension. The amount of property that would be needed was not known at this early stage.
- **John Sutherns** stated that studies were being conducted in order to forecast the impact of specific traffic levels in the area. More information would be available at the next Public Meeting.
- **Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski** emphasized that the impact of the Extension on Dufferin Street was an important consideration for City Staff.

A participant commented that most of the plans for improvement of the waterfront area involved plans for improvement in an east-west direction. The participant inquired whether there were plans for revitalization in a north-south direction. The participant suggested that the City undertake projects to extend the park system southward from High Park.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the development of the park system was one of the goals of the larger master plan. City Staff would take the participant's suggestion into consideration.
- **Councillor Pantalone** stated that the Front Street Extension project would permit the park system to be extended in a north-south direction as the participant suggested.

A participant wanted to know what would happen to the Front Street Extension if the Gardiner Expressway were to be torn down.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that the Front Street Extension is an integral component of the entire Waterfront Plan including the removal of the Gardiner. The development of the Front Street Extension alignment will take into consideration the proposed removal of the Gardiner Expressway. She also noted that the Front Street Extension has benefits independent of the future plans for the Gardiner.

A participant who was a small business owner located at 7 Fraser Avenue wanted to know about the impact of the Extension on her building location. The participant was concerned that the tenants of the building would have inconsistent interests with their landlord who might be interested in selling the property to the City at a profit. The

participant was concerned over the possibility that her business and that of the other tenants would be displaced.

- **Helen Noehammer** suggested that a meeting be set up, through Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski's office, with the City Staff and the tenants of the participant's building to discuss possible impacts. Helen stated that the City Staff preferred not to displace businesses located in the area.

A participant expressed concern over the fact that many of the new building developments and new road networks in the neighbourhood were not represented on the map displaying the plans for the Front Street Extension.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the base plan was developed some time ago and the changes to the neighbourhood were not yet represented on the map. The map would be updated at a future time.

A participant stated that Strachan Avenue was currently disconnected from the waterfront. The participant was concerned that the construction of a six-lane Front Street would further impede access to the waterfront for pedestrians and cyclists traveling north-south on Strachan Avenue. The participant stated that the aim of the City should be to make the waterfront more accessible and visually pleasing through landscaping and other improvements on Strachan Avenue in a north-south direction.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the development of plans would take the concerns into consideration.

A participant wanted to know whether the Part-Two Roundtable Discussions were being reflected in this plan. The participant also wanted to know what north-south boundaries were included in the Assessment.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the comments from the Part-Two Plan were in fact being integrated. The boundaries of the Assessment were the Gardiner Expressway to the south and King Street to the north.

A participant was concerned that the Front Street Extension would lead to increased traffic congestion along King Street.

- **Councillor Pantalone** stated that this extension was needed to improve the overall east-west directed road system.

A participant stated that they felt the improvement of a single road would not do much to relieve traffic congestion in the city as a whole.

- **Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski** stated that there would be ramifications for the immediate surrounding area.

A participant stated that improvements need to be made to Lake Shore Boulevard in order to make the street friendlier to pedestrian traffic and cyclists. The participant expressed concern over the heavy focus on automobile traffic that is characteristic of the street in question. The participant felt that the Front Street Extension would add more traffic to the area and thereby exacerbate the existing situation.

- **Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski** stated that more links were needed to the waterfront.

A participant stated that the City of Toronto had the opportunity to create something beautiful through this project akin to a “gateway” to the city. However, in order to accomplish this, the City needs to have overall community improvement as its goal and not traffic accommodation. The participant suggested that the City first obtain a balanced budget prior to starting any project so that cuts to aesthetic elements of the project will not need to be made at a later date in order to make the whole project more economical. Second, the participant suggested that the City commit to a thorough study analysis of the impact the Extension will have on local roads and the Gardiner Expressway.

- **Helen Noehammer** noted that urban design issues are being addressed as part of the study, as are traffic impacts.

Another participant emphasized that prior to any approval of the Extension project, more interest groups and City Departments need to be invited to voice their opinions such as the TTC, the Urban Planning Department etc.

- **Helen Noehammer** noted that all potentially affected groups, agencies and City Departments are being contacted for their input.

Another participant stated that while the Extension project might be successful in reducing the traffic congestion on the Gardiner Expressway, there would not be any reduced capacity in the larger context. The Extension project simply diverts traffic from one road to another. In addition, the participant felt that if the Extension project were to go ahead, emphasis must be placed on making the road visually attractive.

- **Helen Noehammer** reiterated that Front Street is being considered as part of an overall Waterfront transportation system. Helen also reiterated the fact that urban design is a key part of the study.

Another participant was concerned over the impact on historic sites in the area. In addition, the participant expressed concern over the possibility of increased traffic congestion in the Portland-Niagara area and its impact on residents. Lastly, the participant asked the City Staff to keep road speed limits low in order to keep the neighbourhood safe

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that these comments would be reflected in the plan development.

A participant stated that in their view, there was very little consideration given to improvements to public transit. While the participant expressed interest in the bicycle lanes to be added to Front Street, they felt that the location was too far south for many cyclists to actually make use of the lanes.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that TTC and GO plans are an integral part of the Front Street Extension Project.

A participant asked whether there would be a barrier constructed between the bicycle lanes and motor vehicle traffic. The participant stated that a marked line on the road was insufficient to ensure the safety of the cyclists.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that bicycle lanes will be incorporated but that the project was not at the stage of developing details yet.

A participant was concerned over the possibility that there would be increased traffic congestion around the Jameson Street ramps onto and off of the Gardiner Expressway.

A participant encouraged other participants to make their views known during the environmental assessment stage of the planning process in order to effect change. In addition, the participant stated that they wanted to see numerical figures showing the impact the Extension project would have on traffic levels.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that traffic analysis is part of the study.

A participant asked why the buildings located in the south end of Fraser Avenue needed to be expropriated and demolished.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the exact alignment of the roadway was not yet known and specific property requirements have not been finalized. Meetings with the public, however, would be held before any action was taken.
- **Councilor Korwin-Kuczynski** stated that as little land would be taken as was possible.

A participant asked why the City was putting a park in the area at the south end of Fraser Avenue. The participant felt that this choice of location seemed to be very arbitrary.

- **Helen Noehammer** agreed that the choice of location was, in fact, arbitrary but that the detailed plan would determine whether this was an appropriate location for open space or whether the existing buildings can be maintained.

A participant expressed concern over the possibility of increased levels of traffic on Front Street, where the participant lives. The participant was also concerned over the possibility of increased levels of noise.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that these concerns would be addressed at future meetings when studies on these areas of impact would be available.

A participant requested that the Front Street Extension maintain a “human dimension” as the main focus of the project. In addition, the participant requested information about the breakdown of the budget.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the total cost of the project would be \$170 million. However, a more specific breakdown of cost was not available at that time.

A participant asked whether GO Transit or TTC services would at any time be disturbed during the construction phase of the project.

- **Helen Noehammer** replied that transit service may be physically impacted but that service would be maintained during construction.

A participant asked whether the Gardiner Expressway would be impacted during the construction phases of the project.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the Gardiner Expressway would be impacted, as ramps connecting Front Street to the Gardiner needed to be constructed. The extent of disruption was not yet known.

A participant raised a complaint over the lack of human dimension the project possessed. The participant suggested that instead of expropriating land on south Fraser Avenue and thereby displacing residents, the City should build parks in the place of parking lots.

A participant inquired as to what proportion of the estimated cost of the project was allocated to urban design.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that this was not known at the time. However, the goal of the Extension project was to make the street user friendly for all.

A participant asked whether there were would be future presentations on this project for the public.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that a second public consultation session was tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2002. All participants on the mailing list would be notified in advance.

A participant of the High Park area stated that this plan was not beneficial to the community. The participant was concerned over traffic in the area, especially along King Street that was already heavily congested. The participant was also concerned over the new residents of the area, many of whom have not yet moved into the neighbourhood and may not be aware of the proposed changes at hand.

Another participant stated that the project lacked long-term vision because it did not provide sufficiently for north-south access to and from Lake Shore Boulevard.

Another participant expressed concern over how a single road, being Front Street, would accommodate the onslaught of vehicle traffic. The participant suggested that Front Street be connected to Richmond St.

- **Helen Noehammer** stated that the plans that would be available in the fall would address these various issues.

4.0 Closing

Helen Noehammer thanked all participants for attending the meeting.

Note: Any comments about or revisions to these meeting minutes should be directed to Christine Iamonaco, Public Consultation Coordinator, at (416) 392-4312.

