

TORONTO

City of Toronto/Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation

Front Street Extension Class Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Design Study

Meeting Minutes

Public Open House #22

(September 18, 2002)

**Public Open House #2
Wednesday September 22, 2002
National Trade Centre
100 Princess' Boulevard, Hall D, Salon 110
6:00 p.m. – 9:10 p.m.**

Approximately 110 stakeholders attended this event. Ninety-seven signed in. Including staff and consultants the total meeting attendance was approximately 136 people.

1. Open House

Between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., the public had an opportunity to meet with staff and consultants and preview information on display.

2. Welcome

Christine Iamonaco called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

3. Housekeeping Items

Christine Iamonaco covered housekeeping items and informed participants that the meeting was being recorded for minute-taking purposes. People who signed in and added their address to the mailing list would receive minutes and other information about the Front Street Extension project and all the other waterfront projects as well. The public was encouraged to return comment sheets by **October 4, 2002**.

4. Introductions

Christine Iamonaco introduced Councillor Joe Pantalone, Helen Noehammer, the City's Project Manager, John Sutherns from McCormick Rankin Corporation. Also attending were consultants from Cole Sherman and Giffels Associates Ltd., as well as representatives from the Waterfront Revitalization Corporation and City Staff from various departments. Councillor Korwin-Kuczynski was introduced.

5. Presentation

Helen Noehammer began her presentation at 7:05 p.m. (see Attachment). Her presentation provided:

- A history and overview of the Front Street Extension project
- A description and comparison of the alternative alignments and their impacts
- An outline of the next steps after this open house.

6. Question, Comment and Answer Session

At 7:37 p.m., **Christine Iamonaco** invited questions and comments from the public. The following is a summary:

Public comment and questions are italicised. If the person was offering a comment or opinion, no response is recorded. Where a question was asked the response is provided below.

Why is the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation absent from this process? Why are its representatives not here tonight and why are there no public meetings on what they are doing?

(Christine Iamonaco)

Representatives from the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (TWRC) are present tonight, including Bruce Bodden and Steve Willis. The TWRC will be starting their public consultation process in the near future.

You did not present Alternative T tonight, which involves building a transit route. Transit should be the priority and it is a shame that so much energy is focused on this highway.

(Helen Noehammer)

The Front Street Extension is a component of a larger plan, which includes all the other modes of transportation. At the Open House tonight, the City displayed some of the Waterfront Revitalization plans that include transit routes.

I am a Parkdale resident and my neighbourhood has not been mentioned. When they built the Gardiner in the southern half of our neighbourhood, Parkdale went into a decline.

Instead of taking out part of Exhibition Place and putting more road along Front Street from Bathurst to Dufferin, put a streetcar line with bike paths at either side, like at Queen's Quay. This would cost a lot less and take pressure off the Queen streetcar line. This is the way to get people out of their cars. This will avoid putting people at Parkdale or Liberty at a disadvantage.

(Helen Noehammer)

The larger Waterfront Revitalization plan contemplates extending the Bathurst Streetcar route further to the west.

(Christine Iamonaco)

The project team will take the input from this evening into consideration in evaluating the alternatives.

A lot of money is being spent to make room for cars. It does not matter which alternative you choose because a lot of people are not happy with any of them. More roads will mean more traffic and this is the wrong direction to take. A better use of this money would be to put \$73 million into the Toronto Bike plan and \$90 million to improve TTC. I have brought a petition, or rather an information sheet, for anybody interested to sign. I am astounded this is not being considered as an alternative.

All I have seen on the displays is that this has been talked about for 20 years and that therefore a need for this project has been proven. However, no need has been or ever will be proven.

People on the north side of the railway tracks will not have access to the streetcar extension on the south side. How will people get across the rail lines?

(Gary Carr, TTC)

The broader plan for the Waterfront includes improving transit. The TTC is looking at better use of the Harbourfront 509 streetcar line. Also, the TTC's long-term plans include a Waterfront west LRT line, although this plan may be too expensive given the TTC's financial difficulties. The TTC is also studying the possibility of putting a bus route on Bremner Blvd. to serve the Harbourfront as well.

(Helen Noehammer)

The City has plans for future connections. The streetcar loop would let you get onto the streetcar anywhere along Dufferin street. At a public consultation meeting earlier this week, local residents indicated that they use the Atlantic connection and the Go Transit pedestrian tunnel to get across the rail corridor into the Exhibition Place. They indicated the usefulness of this connection.

The City should have also consulted with CP Rail, not just CN and GO.

(Helen Noehammer)

The City has also consulted with all stakeholders in rail corridor including CP Rail.

Alternative C is missing – C stands for “crap” and in my opinion all the alternatives are “C’s”. City staff talked about lots of turning movements and sharp turns and these curves are designed to accommodate cars at speed. Everybody who lives around here and sees these plans is shuddering because these roads will be really fast. You can include as much sidewalk as you like but most people won’t use them if they are in an inhospitable environment.

Streets such as Queen have pivotal businesses, a large tax base, and many people moving through them. These streets build the city and give us income. The City has forgotten how to build roads and this is very evident in the alternatives for the Front Street Extension plan. We want Front Street, not Front Highway.

Also, you cannot put bike lanes on a road and then have two right-turning highway ramps. If you ban bicycles, you will give a better of idea what the plan really means. In my opinion, the plan is divided into “friendly street” (west of Strachan) and “shitty street” (east of Strachan). To make it more friendly, the trees on “friendly street” should be shading the sidewalk, for example.

Can you tell us about Alternative C?

(Helen Noehammer)

Alternative C is a combination of Alternative A and Alternative B. Alternative C resembles Alternative A because the two ramps are not elevated. Alternative C resembles Alternative B because the local street is in between the larger street.

I live on Springhurst and I am afraid. I can see my house on the map but there have been no traffic assessments or impact studies for my neighbourhood. The purpose of this plan is to facilitate alternative traffic lanes from outside areas. There will be increased traffic in my area. South Parkdale is a fragile area and it is trying to build itself back up from a pretty horrible state. There are speed bumps but volume is an issue. I would like to have some assessment of the impacts on my community.

(Helen Noehammer)

The City has undertaken an analysis to determine the traffic impacts and infiltration.

(John Sutherns)

The handout and Open House displays include information about present and future traffic distributions. Four (4)% of the traffic from the Front Street corridor will head through the area. There will be a change of traffic patterns but large volumes of traffic will not be introduced.

The main part of Front Street is primarily intended to direct traffic from the Gardiner to downtown. The local road is a two-lane, local access roadway and it is not intended as a major thoroughfare. It cannot handle much traffic. It is true that during unusually busy periods, traffic will be distributed through all streets.

In my opinion, 4% of a huge volume is a lot for a small street like Springhurst.

The speaker introduced himself as Stan Repka.

I am an area resident and I am glad we are finally doing something. I am in favour of Alternative G because it has the least effect of Fort York and the rail line.

I think the Abattoirs will have to go because of future construction on King Street and in Liberty Village, especially in light of what has happened at St. Clair.

I am disappointed because there are no plans for public transportation. You should bring in other streetcars to relieve streetcar traffic on King Street. I do recognize that we do need cars and that people need to get to work in their cars.

The speaker introduced himself as Shawn Nick, member of Transport 2000 Ontario.

- 1. In the western alternatives, how many lanes are the ramps in each direction? If the ramps are two lanes in each direction then, along with the two-lane road, the result will be six-lane road. There will be a bottleneck just east of Strachan where you proposed that loop.*
- 2. In Alternative E, how much will a bridge cost? Are we really going to spend money to make an aesthetically pleasing bridge?*
- 3. I am not sure why you are proposing a six-lane road, even after the Gardiner is redeveloped. You cannot physically have six lanes east of Bathurst.*
- 4. Considering that this is a plan to relieve traffic on the Gardiner, have you considered that the money could go into many more GO trains?*

(Helen Noehammer)

1. The ramps to the Gardiner are one lane in each direction as long as Front Street has four lanes. If and when Front Street needs to be increased to six lanes, then the ramps will be expanded to two lanes in each direction.
2. The City will be able to provide more information about costs at the November public meeting. The project team has not gone into that level of detail yet because we are not only dealing with straightforward engineering costs. Other costs, such as rail and property impacts, must be assessed.
3. There will only be six lanes if the Gardiner is reconfigured. Some of proposals put the Gardiner in a tunnel. The tunnel section reduces the cross-section from the current six down to four and two lanes from the Gardiner will be transferred onto Front so that the capacity in that corridor will be maintained. Also, the City's plans to widen Front Street east of Bathurst involve taking the property from the southern rail corridor. Approaching Spadina, the road will split into two one-way streets.

4. The Front Street Extension is one of four waterfront revitalization priority projects. Another priority project is the TTC's Union Station Subway Platform Expansion. A GO Transit expert would be able to provide a more detailed response to your question.

This plan benefits people from the 905 area. There are 2 people here from Brampton and no councillors from Brampton. This money could be used for the 10-year bike plan or for transit.

I accept that we have to have some sort of Front Street Extension to get more traffic in and out of downtown. Could you treat Front Street as an extension to the Gardiner but do nothing to the local streets? Can we simply make the local streets all transit?

(Helen Noehammer)

The City is interested in hearing input on new options that the public would like to put forward, in addition to the options that were presented tonight.

(Parkdale resident and a member of Transport 2000 Ontario)
Do you know what the afternoon peaks are going out from the Gardiner?

(John Sutherns)

The morning and evening traffic levels were displayed on panels in the foyer, prior to the presentation session. John Sutherns, with McCormick Rankin, the consulting engineer on the project offered to review the data with the questioner after the Q and A session. The questioner did not respond.

I prefer alternative E. I am glad to see that you put in a bridge because otherwise you would have to go quite a distance under the railway tracks and would encounter problems with water.

If I were Toronto Abattoirs, I would move out. City Council is getting rid of companies and then complaining about the lack of industrial base in the city.

Also, the traffic light at the intersection of Strachan and Front could lead to accidents. Left turns should not be allowed. This should be a right turn only intersection.

I have lived in this neighbourhood for a number of years. It is easy to get around without a car in this neighbourhood. Other visions for this neighbourhood are possible and this is why people are so disappointed. This project represents a direction a lot of people do not want to follow.

You showed us a picture of the local street and I want to put that in context. There were 23 smog days this year. For someone who cycled this summer, the street does not look very friendly because it is a barren landscape where I can feel the heat, smog from cars, etc

(Helen Noehammer)

A lot of people have trouble visualizing a plan therefore urban design specialists on our team have come up with conceptual pictures of what the streets might look like. This is not the definitive way the street will look but an artist's depiction. Perhaps more trees or greens will need to be added.

Also, the Environmental Assessment process involves ongoing consultation and the City welcomes your input on these issues.

I am a member of Friends of Fort York. I sat on the Front Street Review Committee and developed Alternative F with the underpass.

Fort York has endured the Gardiner since 1959. We are concerned that the bridge option would give Fort York a Gardiner-like structure on both sides.

Alternative E, the bridge option, would cost \$25 million. The underpass option would cost \$20 million. These are numbers given by consulting engineers. I am concerned that elevations and impact on the Niagara neighbourhood have been overlooked.

I think we are going backwards by planning the Front Street Extension before finalizing plans for the Gardiner. Are some of your alternatives not precluding a Gardiner option? Shouldn't the planning be in parallel, not in sequence?

(Helen Noehammer)

The Waterfront Corporation is involved in the plans for the Gardiner and the Front Street Extension. The Waterfront Corporation ensures that all the projects in the area are consistent and not working at cross-purposes. Also, the Front Street Extension needs to be built as a precursor to any project on the Gardiner.

I am a cyclist from Abbott Street. I know a cyclist who was killed on an on-ramp. I would be scared to send children onto that road.

I suggest you consult with the cycling community in order to build the best cycling infrastructure. Separate the bicycle lane from the road and put it on a raised level so that bicycles do not share the road or lose their space to parking. Also, cars hit pedestrians. This will be high speed high traffic road and I do not see how you will slow it down without a lot of stop signs

Three things stand out with this plan:

- 1. It is traffic or car oriented.*
- 2. It is east-west in direction.*
- 3. It widens the gap between the city and the lake*

The City seems to be going at cross-purposes. Many nice plans, such as the North-South Cultural Corridor Plan and Garrison Linkage Plan (Fort York Garrison Creek Open Space Master Plan), seem to have vanished. The pedestrian crossings only appear in a diminished form in two of the alignments for the section east of Strachan.

I do not like Alternative E because of the bridge.

Alternative F is possible.

Alternative G and H hardly leave any space for a bridge and, in these circumstances, a bridge would be very expensive to build.

(Helen Noehammer)

One of the objectives of the Front Street Extension is to ensure that the plans you mentioned will still be possible.

I find it very difficult to get facts and information from consultants, professionals, planners and politicians. The City should hire an independent consultant to perform a capacity study of Springhurst Avenue, particularly because the street is a TTC transit route. I personally know that the street is jam-packed and I think this will hinder passage of emergency vehicles.

I would like to see specific accredited pollution analysis of the chemical, noise and vibration effects of the project. For this environmental assessment, we do not have any energy audits. We need to find out what energies are required to build these different options. Where are the transportation impact studies that have been done over the years leading up to this project? We need facts, not planning fiction.

It looks like a lot of the people you spoke to were rich people. Poor people have equally valuable opinions. A lot of us live on Springhurst Ave. because we want a quiet street. We want only transit and bikes on our street.

Will any part of the Front Street Extension have just one car lane in either direction?

(Helen Noehammer)

Yes, the local road (highlighted blue on the map) is only one lane in each direction. The other part of the road (highlighted orange) will be four lanes until we begin construction on the Gardiner.

Smog increases every year and 50% of the smog in our city comes from cars. The Official Plan aims to improve transit access to downtown and discourage all-day parking and automobile commuting. The Part 2 Plan [for the waterfront] claims the next generation of transportation will give priority to transit, cycling, walking and water transport while reducing the need for car use.

All our plans are talking about reducing cars and traffic but we are spending so much money on building more roads. Politicians say there is no money to reduce transit fares or for the bike plans but you are putting \$172 million of transport money into car travel. Perhaps the Front Street Extension should be tolled or have user fees because studies show that cars are being subsidized by taxpayers.

This plan focuses on facilitating the flow of cars in and out of the city. This plan is so "1950s" and it will make Toronto worse rather than better. Other cities are going in the opposite direction.

The Front Street Extension is being sold to us as a mechanism for getting rid of the Gardiner. We should only undertake projects that improve the City's civic character but this project does not do so, especially because it is very ugly. Do not build another highway. Fort York Boulevard is pretty and it is an asset to the community. Many people are very upset because their concerns have not been addressed and I am looking forward to improvement at the next meeting.

This project did not proceed for 20 years because of concern over increasing the volume of traffic into downtown. I understand that the plan is meant to distribute traffic differently, rather than increase it. However, if you commit to the Front Street Extension before there is a decision on the Gardiner, you will increase the volume of cars going into downtown Toronto. Is it not better to plan the Gardiner reconfiguration and the Front Street Extension at the same time?

(Helen Noehammer)

One of the base assumptions of the Waterfront Plan and the proposals to reconfigure the Gardiner was that the Front Street Extension would be in place. There will be no increased capacity once Front Street is in place and the Gardiner is reconfigured. All historic studies identify a need for this additional route or access point into the downtown core.

We need to have more time for these consultations.

We need to construct transit priority streets. We also need exclusive entrances to the hospitals downtown. I do not accept the rationale that you have transit covered in the Central Waterfront Part II Plan because you must recognize the reality that transit is under-funded. It is not acceptable to spend \$170 million on road relief given transit's funding problem. Can you sincerely work on Alternative T for next time? Consult with Etobicoke and Mississauga and consider tolling the Gardiner.

How long will this take to build?

(Helen Noehammer)

Construction will take approximately three years.

Have there been any studies on using the lanes differently on the roadway by having features such as bicycle lanes, transit, etc?

(Helen Noehammer)

From a transit perspective, the plan contemplates extending the 509 streetcar route to Dufferin. TTC representative Gary Carr also alluded to the potential for using Front Street for bus service. These ideas can still be explored as we move forward.

7. Wrap-up

Christine Iamonaco thanked everybody for attending the meeting. She informed participants that their comments have been noted and invited everybody to submit comment sheets by October 4, 2002. The meeting finished at 9:10 p.m. Consultants and project staff were available to answer questions and hear comments after the meeting.