



Royal York Road Safety Audit Public Meeting
January 11, 2005
Etobicoke Collegiate Institute, Cafeteria
86 Montgomery Road
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

1.0 Welcoming Remarks and Overview

Tom Ellerbusch, Manager of Design and Construction, opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. He welcomed those in attendance and introduced **Mr. Peter Milczyn** (Councillor for Ward 5), **Dominic Gulli** (Manager of Traffic Operations), **Al Smithies** (Manager of Traffic Planning), **Eric Leon** (Senior Project Engineer), **Ray Bacquie** (iTRANS), **Liza Sheppard** (iTRANS), and **David Nagler** (Public Consultation Unit).

It was explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present the findings of the Royal York Road safety audit from Ashley Road to Mimico Creek that was conducted by iTRANS. The safety issues identified in the audit will help in developing design options for the reconstruction of Royal York Road.

Another public meeting will be held on February 16 to examine the design alternatives for the reconstruction of Royal York Road and on March 9 there will be a presentation of the final design that is selected. The reconstruction will consist of three projects. The first is for the section from Bloor Street to Mimico Creek, which will be tendered for construction in May and will include water main replacement, as well as sidewalk and sewer work. The second project is for the section from Bloor Street to Usher Avenue, which will be tendered for construction from June to August. The third project is for the section from Usher Avenue to the plaza, which will be tendered for construction from July into the fall. Construction will therefore take place over the entire summer. \$8 million has been budgeted for the project.

It was also noted that the sewer connections north of Bloor Street will be replaced beginning in February, with work being completed by April. In addition, it was announced that Urban Forest Innovations has been hired to immediately begin a tree audit along Royal York Road.

2.0 Presentation – Ray Bacquie, iTRANS

Ray Bacquie explained that a road safety audit is a formal and independent safety performance review of an existing roadway by an experienced team of safety

specialists. The safety of all road users is examined. The objective of this particular audit was to identify issues related to safety that will be considered in the Royal York Road reconstruction project. The results of the audit will be used specifically to recommend appropriate countermeasures for incorporation into road design alternatives.

The audit consisted of collecting, reviewing and analyzing roadway condition information including: 6-year collision data, traffic data, geometrics, signage, sightlines, pavement markings, pedestrian crossings, etc. In addition, safety issues were identified based on collision information, consultations with City of Toronto staff and Toronto Police Services, and field investigations.

Findings:

- Collision Summary:
 - About 42% of the collisions over the past 6 years occurred in the Bloor Street area due to high traffic volume and roadway activities in this location. The number of collisions is not abnormally high and the intersection does not fall within the top 500 intersections in the City in terms of collision frequency.
 - Of the 407 collisions that occurred from 1998 – 2003, 24 were pedestrian related and 5 involved cyclists, 3 at the north end terminus of the bike lane, and 2 at the south end of the corridor.
- Sight Distances at Intersections:
 - While there are sightline restrictions caused by boulevard trees, utility poles, retaining walls and stopped buses at approximately 60% to 70% of the intersections, **it was found that there is no significant correlation between sightline restrictions and collisions.**
- Pavement Conditions:
 - Surface is deteriorating, particularly at intersections, and road shoulders have expanded into roadside ditches.
- Sign Conditions:
 - A number of signs are obstructed by trees or roadside objects
 - Some signs have faded line work and faint reflectivity
- Observed Operational Issues:
 - Vehicles making use of opposing lane to maneuver around stopped vehicles in the 2-lane section of the roadway (potential for head-on collisions).
 - Vehicles making use of shoulder to overtake left-turn waiting vehicles in the 2-lane section of the roadway (unsafe for vehicles and pedestrians).
 - Vehicles reversing from driveways interrupt traffic flow (potential for rear-end collisions).
- Travel Speeds:
 - Average travel speeds are greater than the 50 km/h posted speed limit within the Dundas Street interchange, and at the Mimico Creek Bridge. Excessive speed

does not necessarily cause more accidents, but it does increase the severity of collisions. Change of speed is more of a safety issue.

- Peak Hour Traffic Operations:
 - There is reserve capacity at intersections, although the Bloor Street northbound through and westbound through/right turn movements are approaching capacity.
 - Delays exceed 50 seconds for minor street movement, at Ashley Road (eastbound left), Humbertown Access (northbound left), Royal York Court (westbound left/right) and Kingsgrove Boulevard (eastbound and westbound).
- Pedestrian Crossing and Traffic Signal Warrants:
 - Existing pedestrian crossing locations at Kingsgrove Boulevard, King Georges Road and Meadowcrest Road do not meet signal warrants.
 - The Meadowcrest Road crossing may not be ideally located given the adjacent church driveway.
- Roadside Safety:
 - No established clear zone or barrier curbs.
- Night Time Investigation:
 - No enhanced illumination provided at the Bloor Street subway area even though the location has a high collision frequency).
 - Trees hamper some night time visibility from Usher Avenue to Meadowcrest Road.
 - Poor reflectivity of some roadside signs
 - Pedestrians are obscured by trees at King Georges Road and Kingsgrove Boulevard crosswalk locations.
- Particular Safety Issues by Location:
 - Driver confusion as to where additional lane begins at Ashley Road intersection.
 - Southbound right turn radius and channel width are tight at Lambeth Road intersection.
 - There is a downgrade at Dundas Street intersection causing excessive travel speeds. In addition there are poor lane markings, sightline restrictions, and potential safety concerns related to the location of the bus stop.
 - There are alignment issues related to the Government Road ramp terminal.
 - There is a narrowing of Royal York approaching Usher Avenue (3 lanes merging into 1) and lane marking issues.
 - Issues at the Bloor intersection include: location of taxi queues, illegal on-street parking, vehicles blocking bus entrances, pedestrian J-walking, pavement marking deficiencies, insufficient left-turn storage lengths, and many bus stop locations.

3.0 Comments, Concerns and Questions

Collisions	Response
Have any accidents been caused because of trees blocking lights? Did your study look at factors causing the collisions?	Ray Bacquie replied that collisions were summarized in a collision diagram. Within the diagram arrows are used to reflect the movement of the pedestrian or vehicle, severity of collision, and time of day. The characteristics of each and every collision in the corridor are shown in the diagrams. It is hard to distinguish pedestrians crossing at night, however we did not see a particular trend related to night collisions.
The number of collisions at the Bloor Street intersection are not abnormally high compared to what?	Ray Bacquie explained that the number of collisions is not abnormally high when compared to the number of vehicles using the intersection. The measurement is a function of the frequency of collisions compared to the volume of traffic. There are 1878 signal intersections in Toronto.
Is passing on the shoulder a major safety concern and will it be addressed in re-design? Won't people just drive faster if the road is widened to mitigate shoulder passing?	Ray Bacquie replied that generally speaking there is a correlation between lane width, road width and speed. The grade of the road and closeness of elements such as houses and trees also affect speed. At the Dundas intersection speeds are higher, but change of speeds is more of an issue due to transition problems. We can't specifically define a collision trend related to passing on the right hand shoulder.
Where is it most dangerous for pedestrians?	Liza Sheppard replied that the most pedestrian collisions occurred at the Bloor Street intersection. The Usher Avenue intersection had the second most pedestrian collisions.

Trees	Response
Does "clear zone" mean removal of trees?	Ray Bacquie replied that the safety concerns associated with roadside trees have to be weighed against the aesthetic and calming affect of trees.
How many people ran into trees between 1998 to 2003?	Ray Bacquie replied that he did not have specific numbers, but he noted that collisions with trees were not a frequent occurrence.
Royal York is not a major arterial road it is a minor arterial road. We like the trees here.	Comment noted.

Sightlines	Response
Could the hydro poles be buried?	Ray Bacquie replied that burying the hydro poles is prohibitively expensive.

Cyclists	Response
Is the bike lane on Royal York Road a safety concern?	Ray Bacquie noted that the continuity of the bike route and safety concerns will be examined as part of the reconstruction project.
What safety features are used to help cyclists feel safe from motorists?	Ray Bacquie explained that it may not be desirable to encourage cyclists on some streets. There is a hierarchy of measures that could be used to ensure the safety of cyclist. The best measure is to create a completely separate bike lane, however for the study area what is needed is continuity in the bike lane. Dominic Gulli noted that the City will be looking at the needs of all road users as part of the road reconstruction design work.

Lane Width	Response
Is there enough room for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and emergency vehicles? Future road improvements should ensure that there is sufficient room for drivers to be able to pull over to the right to let emergency vehicles through.	Ray Bacquie noted that presently there is enough room for drivers to pull over onto the shoulders of the road, however during the safety audit study no emergency vehicles were observed in the corridor. This issue will be considered in future initiatives especially if there are changes to the roadway cross section.
Royal York Road is too narrow for emergency vehicles.	Comment noted.
How do narrow roads get approved? Don't narrow roads affect the response times for emergency vehicles?	Al Smithies replied that roads are broken down into main, arterial, and local roads. Local roads such as King Georges are simply for property access. Typically there are not issues with on-street parking on local roads because the houses along them have longer driveways and bigger set backs.
If the road is widened the character of it will be lost.	Comment noted.

<i>Number of Lanes</i>	<i>Response</i>
Will lane reductions be considered as a means to reduce speed and ease transitions?	Ray Bacquie replied that the recommendations that arise from a safety audit are modest. The merits of lane changes will be considered in the next phase as part of the road reconstruction.
Aren't lanes really redundant since Royal York is no longer going to be widened?	Al Smithies noted that there was a 4 and 6 lane plan for Royal York Road 30 or 40 years ago.
If there are more lanes it will create two separate neighbourhoods in the Kingsway.	Comment noted.

<i>Traffic Speed</i>	<i>Response</i>
Curbs have a traffic calming effect.	Comment noted.
To what extent is streetscape clutter slowing people down?	Ray Bacquie explained that this is hard to assess, but there is a correlation between road elements and speed.
We don't want Royal York Road to be the new south Kingsway.	Comment noted.

<i>Interruptions to Traffic Flow</i>	<i>Response</i>
Would it be safer if cars were only allowed to exit from the lane by the subway station?	Ray Bacquie replied that no it is actually easier for vehicles to move into the lane than exit from it. What would help is changing the location of the taxi operation.
Is there a greater chance of merging or courtesy gaps with slower speeds?	Ray Bacquie explained that drivers on the main street do not stop for others unless traffic is moving very slowly or there are long queues. People will not stop for merging traffic from side streets unless the traffic is moving at very low speeds.

<i>Traffic Volumes</i>	<i>Response</i>
How much will the traffic volume increase in the next 60 years?	Dominic Gulli replied that significant traffic volume increases are not expected. Currently 25,000 vehicles use Royal York Road in a 24 hour period.
Can the City prohibit truck traffic?	Dominic Gulli explained that under the Highway Traffic Act trucks are allowed to use any road if it is the shortest route between the destination and the point of origin, even if a road is posted no heavy trucks. If the community wants to prohibit trucks it can, but whether or not it can be enforced is another matter.

Bus Stops	Response
Will there be a change of bus stops on Royal York Road?	Ray Bacquie replied that there are some safety concerns related to the bus stops at the Bloor Street intersection and at Dundas Street. Any changes to bus stops would need to involve the TTC.
The bus stop at King Georges Road is dangerous because people try to pass the bus and there is a cross walk right there.	Ray Bacquie noted the safety audit examined the distances between crosswalks and bus stops. There are some issues that need to be addressed.
Is there enough time to move the bus stop locations before March 9?	Tom Ellerbusch replied that the bus stop locations are worked out based on the distance people have to walk to get TTC access. Moving bus stop locations slightly due to safety concerns is not a problem, but eliminating stops altogether is difficult.

Data Collection	Response
Did you consult with the provincial court to find out what kind of traffic violations are happening in the corridor?	Ray Bacquie replied that there were consultations with Toronto Police Services. It was found that taxi queues, jay walking, and u-turns were a concern at the Bloor Street intersection.

Overall Findings	Response
Are there no material safety issues on Royal York Road?	Ray Bacquie replied that there are 2 levels of issues, those that can be dealt with by proactive treatment (such as moving the Bloor Street taxi stand, or removing tree branches that are blocking signage), and those that can only be dealt with as part of new projects.
The real issue is behaviour. The focus should be on bad drivers. In addition, why is there limited enforcement to deal with J-walkers?	Ray Bacquie replied that police are enforcing laws at Bloor Street but problems are still there that is why we are looking at a range of solutions from engineering, to education, to enforcement.

Design Alternatives	Response
Have you come up with an alternative for the left turn lane at Usher Avenue?	Ray Bacquie replied that the safety audit shows that there is a need to make drivers aware of the left turn lane and the merging of traffic. This will be addressed as part of the reconstruction of Royal York Road.

Process Issues	Response
Why were two community meetings scheduled for the same date and time? This presents a conflict for people who wish to attend both.	David Nagler apologized for the scheduling conflict and noted that it would not happen again.
What weight does public input carry?	Ray Bacquie replied that the safety audit is separate from the road improvement project. He explained that the safety audit is a background study for input to future work. Comments from the public meeting will be kept on file for projects within the corridor. Issues that people raise related to the safety audit will help supplement the report and iTRANS will add any pertinent information to the document. David Nagler added that any comment sheets that are submitted will be sent to the Project Manager and Project Team for review. Tom Ellerbusch noted that the road safety report will be released in mid February.
There is only 21 days between the February 16 meeting when the design alternatives are outlined and March 9 when the final design is presented. This is a very short timeframe for public input.	Comment noted.
Is the timing of future meetings the way it is because construction needs to begin this spring?	Tom Ellerbusch replied that yes, the money is in place and the road is in need of reconditioning.
What will be presented at the February 16 meeting? Will there be a detailed design plans and particular concepts?	Tom Ellerbusch explained that the purpose of the February 16 meeting will be to present alternative design road cross-sections. Safety information will be provided and the intent will be to look at pros and cons of each option so that a final design can be selected. The details of the final design will then be presented for public information at the March 9 meeting and then construction will begin. Dominic Gulli added that at the February 16 meeting residents will have an opportunity to provide input on the options presented.
When will the final design be presented to Community Council? It should be presented to Community Council because that is a method of consultation.	Tom Ellerbusch said that we were not directed by City Council to submit the Final Design to Community Council for their approval. This project is a Schedule "A" Project under the Municipal Class EA process. We have always met with the Public to present the project and obtain their input, as we strongly support public consultation.

<p>Will the final design be selected at a public meeting or behind closed doors?</p>	<p>Tom Ellerbusch replied that there is a lot for staff to consider when selecting the preferred alternative, but the final design will be presented to the public at the March 9 meeting.</p>
<p>What if residents disapprove of the final design presented at the March 9 meeting?</p>	<p>Tom Ellerbusch said the City has to ensure that the needs of all road users, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and emergency vehicles are addressed and can use the road in the safe and unobstructed manner at all times.</p> <p>We will consider the public input and accommodate their desires provided that the engineering principles and safety aspects are not compromised.</p>
<p>Will staff from the Forestry and Urban Design Department be involved in the February 16 meeting?</p>	<p>Tom Ellerbusch noted that a tree audit is being conducted. The intent of the project is to improve the road and safety for all users. These aspects will be addressed in the final design and there will be input by forestry and urban design staff.</p>
<p>Are safety issues driving the reconstruction of Royal York Road?</p>	<p>Tom Ellerbusch replied that the road condition is driving the reconstruction. The reconstruction that is planned will be designed to last for 60 years before it is reconstructed.</p>

4.0 Closing Remarks

David Nagler thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He noted that the next public meeting would be held on February 16th at Etobicoke Collegiate Institute.