

**St. Clair Avenue West Transit Improvements Class Environmental Assessment
Phase 3 Public Meeting**

Date: Wednesday, June 23, 2004

**Location: Joseph J. Piccininni Community Recreation Centre
1369 St. Clair Avenue West**

Staff	Affiliation
Corazzola, Gene	City of Toronto, Urban Development Services (UDS)
Filipuzzi, Alan	City of Toronto, UDS
Giordano, Josie	City of Toronto, Works and Emergency Services (WES)
Iamonaco-Dagg, Christine	City of Toronto, WES
McPhail, Rod	City of Toronto, UDS
Musters, Joanna	City of Toronto, UDS
Palmer, Penelope	City of Toronto,
Portelli, Louis	City of Toronto, WES
Sinikas, Jim	Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)
Stambler, Mitch	TTC
White, Jacqueline	City of Toronto, WES

Consultants

Brook, Cal	Brook McIlroy
Gough, Jim	Marshall Macklin Monaghan (MMM)
Powell, Michael	Brook McIlroy
Rose, Marc	Hardy Stevenson and Associates
Wanless, Rob	MMM
Vanpoorten, Hans	MMM

Councillors

Mihevc, Joe
Palacio, Cesar

Notes of Public Meeting

From 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. there was an open house, where residents had a chance to review display panels and ask questions of the project team.

The presentation began shortly after 7:00 p.m. Marc Rose welcomed the audience and reviewed the agenda for the evening. He invited Councillor Palacio to share opening remarks.

Councillor Palacio thanked those individuals and groups who have participated in this decision-making process. He stated that he supports public transit improvements and acknowledged the people who are concerned with this process and are against the proposed right-of-way. He also stated that there are concerns regarding access for emergency vehicles, and the impact on neighbourhood traffic and air quality.

He indicated that five BIAs are strongly opposed to the right of way. He concluded by stating that if St. Clair is going to be a precedent for the rest of the city, the City and TTC have to do it right.

Joanna Musters introduced the alternatives that had been evaluated, and described the four alternatives that had been narrowed down from the original nine. She then discussed Alternative 9, one of the final two alternatives being assessed, which is a combination of other alternatives.

Next, Mitch Stambler spoke about Alternative 6, the other of the final two alternatives. He discussed this option in detail. He showed a comparison of the final two Alternatives (6 and 9) and indicated that Alternative 6 has been determined to be the technically preferred alternative. He explained that, with this option, the TTC can accommodate current vehicular traffic and significantly improve transit.

Questions, Comments, and Answers

Members of the audience were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments following the presentations. Questions are indicated below by a capital **Q** and the respective answers by a capital **A**. Any comments are indicated by a capital **C**.

- Q:** My question is to the EA team. We attended a workshop a week ago, and at that workshop, the staff showed us that under Alternative 6, 120 parking spaces would be lost. Tonight the presentation shows that instead of losing 120 spaces, there are 3 new spaces. Where did that number come from?
- A:** The EA team has said that every step of process is evolutionary. Since last week, we have put our heads together to find new creative ways to address the parking issue and were able to find additional spaces, that are technically sound and engineered.
- C:** I have a question for the local councillor. Show me one example where a business has suffered as a result of transit improvements! I am a transit rider, and I want improved service.
- Q:** What happened to the Corso Italia plan for the area?
- A:** The Corso Italia plan was analyzed for the effects it would have on transit and traffic, and it was determined that this plan would be worse for both.
- Q:** I am a resident of Corso Italia. I have noticed that Alternative 6 is expected to cost \$7.5 million more than Alternative 9, so why would you select Alternative 6? Will our property taxes increase because of this?
- A:** Setting aside the cost of building of streetcar tracks, the cost of improvements to the area would be roughly equal under each Alternative. Taxes will not change based on the Alternative that is selected.

- Q:** I have a question for the study team. One week ago, told there were 632 existing parking spaces on St. Clair. Tonight we are told there are 510 existing spaces. How do you account for this loss? You admit there is a 58% loss of parking in the St. Clair Gardens BIA area. This is a staggering loss. You have failed to address the basic issues and concerns of this community. We demand a referendum.
- A:** Referring to the issue of the parking numbers, the number that would be there under the 'do nothing' option is 510. In order to maintain the existing transit service level, the TTC would have to go to multi unit operation, meaning the TTC would have to couple streetcar units together to maintain the current level of transit capacity. Longer platforms are needed to accommodate this. Some street space, including on-street parking, would be lost. We are comparing Alternatives 6 and 9 to the number of spaces under the 'do nothing' alternative. The St. Clair Gardens BIA has been identified as needing new spaces. There is a commitment to replace lost on-street parking spaces with off-street lots.
- C:** I value the St. Clair area and the shops within it. I feel that with a streetcar right-of-way I would shop more on St. Clair. Right now I tend to shop near subway stations, because those areas are more convenient to access. I am a strong supporter of the proposed right of way in Alternative 6.
- C:** My wife, my kids and I are all streetcar riders on St. Clair. I need to get to work, and my kids need to get to school. At every intersection our kids notice that cars block the streetcar. We ask that we can make a trip according to the printed schedule.
- Q:** When are you going to provide us all of your research data, including socioeconomic impact assessments and traffic flow analysis studies?
- A:** We have a great deal of information to report, and we are currently working on all of those reports. We expect they will be available in the next 3-4 weeks.
- Q:** What plans are there to bury the ugly hydro wires and eliminate the wooden poles during construction?
- A:** At a meeting with Toronto Hydro we discussed this issue. In the area of Corso Italia, wires are underground, and Toronto Hydro is waiting for a decision on the St. Clair Avenue West streetcar issue before they take down the poles. Other areas along St. Clair the pole will be replaced as development occurs, because the poles cannot supply hydro to new buildings.
- C:** To the project staff, thanks for the process, and thanks for your boldness in saying the exclusive right-of-way is the best option. People are reluctant to change their routines, but we are all resilient. We can work together to make this plan work.
- C:** I am a resident of this community. I am a single mom and a business owner. My dad was a pioneer on this street. It disturbs me that the City has misled people to think that the local BIAs are part of the decision-making process. In reality this process is biased. The City is trying to marginalize residents and business owners. Mayor David Miller you should come out to our neighbourhood and speak to the residents who voted for you! We want revitalization, not a rapid transit corridor. We will file a class action suit, unless we are listened to as a community.

Q: For this EA process, the focus has been on streetcars and the left turn problem. It is innovative to think there is a solution. This is a marvelous concept for St.Clair. Thank you on behalf of my grandson. We will feel safer traveling with him once Alternative 6 is constructed. I support the transit right of way, but I do have a question. Why are the streetcars so noisy, and how will the right-of-way affect this?

A: For the work done on St. Clair, there will be huge advances in construction methods and materials. There will be steel ties instead of wooden ties, and vibrations and noise will be reduced. Rails will be welded together rather than bolted together. The noise associated with the existing tracks will be eliminated once the new tracks are installed.

Q: I am a third generation St. Clair community resident. You say the streetcar can travel St. Clair three minutes faster under the proposed right-of-way than it does now. What happened to the proposed exclusive right of way between Bathurst and Yonge? What happened to this alternative, why has it not been looked at? I've done my own simulation for the proposed plan, and I've come up with different results. I find that for three minutes of savings for streetcars, vehicles during rush hour have a 72 minute rush hour delay. Mr. Stambler, you stated that Alternative 6 can accommodate all rush hour traffic that exists today. Explain how there is no effect on traffic and parking.

A: To determine the speed of the streetcars, our simulation was very detailed, using optimized traffic signals. The issue is not travel time, but reliability. We looked at exclusive lanes east of Bathurst. Improvement in the reliability of transit is not possible unless a dedicated right-of-way throughout the route is created. For the results in auto delay, the model we used reflects conditions on St. Clair.

In terms of parking on St. Clair, and the effect on businesses, our design retains the majority of parking spaces on the street. There will be some prohibitions during rush hour. We will work with the Parking Authority to provide new parking opportunities. Therefore because parking is largely unchanged, there will only be a small effect on businesses in this area in regards to parking.

C: I live in this area, and I plan on staying here. I'd like to thank the project team for coming to present here today. I'd like to share a quote from Paul Bedford, who recently retired as the Chief Planner and Executive Director of the City of Toronto. His dream for Toronto is a city that feels more like a European city in a North American context. The key to this success is promoting civic, regional and national interest in public transit. Toronto is dependent on the auto, and this will lead to disaster. He challenges us to live life without a car. Above all else, we have to get behind transit, in Toronto and all of the GTA.

C: I am an area resident and a member of SCRIPT. I support the right of way. Now that a preferred alternative has been chosen, we can finally move on and work together as a community. Thanks to the project team for your patience, and thanks for lasting so long!

- Q:** I have been a resident in the area for 20 years, and I am an auto driver. There are 8-10 times as many people driving autos as using the TTC. For every minute you speed up transit, people wait in cars 10 times longer. Spadina cost \$60 million. St.Clair is 2km longer and this is 10 years later. So this proposed right-of-way on St. Clair will cost \$100 million! I shop and drive on St.Clair. Businesses will be losing a lot of money. Where is the compensation for those businesses?
- A:** On St. Clair, 50% of travel trips are on transit. We stand by our cost estimates. Spadina cost more because of the underground work that was done at the same time as the right-of-way for the streetcars. We are sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of businesses. We have a consultation program with businesses and we will work with the local businesses to minimize the disruption during the construction period.
- Q:** Why don't you separate the repair of the tracks from the barrier issue?
- A:** We have explained the cost of rebuilding tracks, it is \$25 million. There is an additional cost of \$6-13million for the additional works, but this does not involve a "barrier". To do the two projects separately would add extra costs.
- Q:** Where will the parking funding come from? Where do EMS vehicles have access on the road? Where will they make left turns? Do they have to travel the additional distance to make left turns like other vehicles will?
- A:** The Parking Authority has a budget for off-street parking. We are working with EMS to ensure that with the design of any right-of-way, they will have the use of a wide open lane. They will work with us to come up with a solution that works best for everyone.
- Q:** Why are we being offered only two alternatives? Why is Alternative 9 being drawn with near side stops versus far sides as shown in Alternative6? Where is it indicated as a preferable solution?
- A:** In the EA process, we started with nine alternatives, and those have been narrowed down to two. We are choosing far side platforms for Alternative 6 because they work well with exclusive right of way lanes for streetcars because there are no other cars behind it to worry about.
- Q:** I am a member of a ratepayers association, and a 25 year resident. In terms of traffic, your statement is that one through lane of vehicular traffic for most of the day will be adequate for current traffic. What about the future? You're not concerned about the future of vehicular traffic, yet you're concerned about the future of streetcars? In terms of parking, over 600 spaces are now down to 510 in the 'do nothing' option. What happens to parking during rush hour?
- A:** Using our travel demand forecasting model, more people are expected to start using transit service. To answer your second question, during rush hours there will be parking restrictions.
- Q:** I am a transit user. I use the streetcar probably 10-15 times a week. There is a problem sharing streetcar tracks with vehicles now. There is too much waiting and bunching. I have a question for the TTC. What about wait time when it comes to reliability?
- A:** There is a time between vehicles that we plan and schedule. Sometimes vehicles are obstructed, and therefore the waiting time for streetcars becomes much larger. If the streetcars have their own lane, we could ensure far more reliable service, and waiting times would therefore be reduced.

- C: There are 3 groups with concerns here; those who want to better TTC service, those who are concerned with traffic, and other residents. I can understand people wanting better service. But you have to educate yourselves that we have to find a better way for everybody. People are upset with the right-of-way proposal because facts have been manipulated. Three out of four councillors in the area oppose it because of the process and unfairness to certain parties. We should get together and show facts. Different areas of St. Clair should be treated differently.
- C: There should be a hierarchy for planning transportation in the city, where the first priority is cyclists, then transit, then parked cars and finally around moving cars. With exclusive the right-of-way, transit will improve. Are the pedestrians going to get squeezed with this proposal? That is a subjective statement, and it's not backed up by data. I think there is a serious problem. I recommend that there is no change in the curb to curb width of St. Clair.
- Q: I would like to thank the TTC and the EA team. I prefer Alternative 6 because it will increase safety. You have shown before and after images of what St. Clair might look like, but you don't show by how much you will narrow the sidewalks on St. Clair. How will the proposed right-of-way affect pedestrians crossing St. Clair?
- A: Sidewalk width changes vary from .5 m to 1 m changes. Cuts into the sidewalk may be more substantial where they are larger now. The right-of-way should make it easier for people to cross through intersections. People can take refuge in the midpoint shelter as they cross. Signal times on St. Clair may be 10 seconds longer to accommodate left turns.
- Q: St. Clair is not Spadina. The road width is much smaller here. How will this affect us? The sidewalks will get smaller. The right-of-way will make it uglier.
- A: We recognize that people are concerned about the sidewalks, and we won't cut them any more than necessary. There is no room for a bike lane once we take all the other needs into consideration, we have to make some compromises. The platforms will be wider. There will be streetscape improvements. Some places will have sidewalk extensions. The area will be made more attractive, as shown by the images.
- Q: The TTC needs to improve the tracks. A number of streetcars have already been removed from service on St. Clair. This is a community, and not a throughway. Your idea of the U-turn for left turns concerns me as a cyclist. I will have to wait. There should be bike lanes. Cars will have to turn right to make a left turn later. What about safety of cyclists?
- A: With Alternative 6, vehicles making left turns will move while other traffic is being held. This can improve safety for cyclists.
- Q: In the last ten years the TTC has reduced service. The reasons for the decrease in ridership are reduction of TTC services, the streetcars are too overcrowded and there are dirty vehicles. What is the TTC doing about this?
- A: The speaker is correct. We have lost riders, and moved backwards because funding from government sources has been cut. That is unfortunate. We do research on what people want from transit. What they want is reliable, fast service. The cleanliness of streetcars does not seem to be an issue.

- C: I am concerned that people here are being rude and not listening to each other. We should listen and calm down. As a grandfather I am concerned about air quality for the future of my grandchildren. We need this right proposed right-of-way now.
- C: I use a lot of shops on St. Clair, and would like to see them stay vibrant. The TTC doesn't care if this whole thing becomes an economic fiasco and negatively affects businesses.
- C: I'm sure a lot of us got the latest newsletter in the mail. These are not myths! They are true concerns of our community! We don't need Alternative 6, and don't want to go 100 m to turn around to make a left turn to my street.
- Q: Why have residents of the areas north and south of St. Clair not been consulted in this project? You say that you are open to public comments and concerns, so why are our calls, e-mails, and letters never answered?
- A: As far as the invitation of people north and south of St. Clair goes, we sent out information to 50,000 houses 3 times during this process. We have delivered newsletters by Canada Post. As far as calls, e-mails, and letters go, we do respond where there is a response warranted. We cannot respond to all comments. We do try to respond to all questions.
- Q: Have any studies been done that show where people go to work?
- A: The City, TTC, province and regions do a comprehensive survey each 5 year period to coincide with the national census about where people work, how they travel, who uses which travel methods, etc. This information is statistically valid. Statistics Canada has this information as well. This information was also collected by the City's 2003 Residential Travel Survey.
- Q: Why is it that a new GO station at St. Clair and Caledonia is possible under Alternative 6 but not Alternative 9? As a cyclist, my safety is put into question as more cars will have to turn right from my left. Has this been taken into consideration? How come you say that you are retaining all on-street parking but in your pictures you show two lanes of traffic but no cars parked? Where are you going to put parking?
- A: GO Transit representatives say it is expensive to build a new station. They will only build a new station if they think the connecting service will be reliable, to make the new station worthwhile. Only Alternative 6 provides an increase in the reliability and quality of transit service to make this connection feasible. In terms of the impact on cyclists, you would normally be able to turn right, and under this alternative, vehicles can turn right in front of cyclists. This would be regular occurrence, so both cars and cyclists would be aware of it.
- Q: For the benefit of those who do not drive on Spadina and may not be familiar with the right-of-way there, streetcars and the vehicles making left turns are forced to wait for a cycle of two lights, so everyone is inconvenienced. I have no doubt that traffic on St Clair will be disrupted. Our area is a delicate maze of one-way streets. We need to be more concerned about that. What about the traffic analysis? Will that focus on St. Clair or focus on the wider area that will be impacted?
- A: For clarification, on Spadina every lane goes once per cycle. The traffic analysis pertains to the model area of Yonge Street in the east to Gunns Road to the west, and Eglinton Avenue to the north and Dupont to the south.

- Q:** I have received a lot of notices regarding this matter in the mail, and I thank you for that. We gave up our car last fall. The proposed right-of-way will let me get to places in my own community. Yes, the construction process will be disruptive, but it is important to do it right. I do support Alternative 6. Will it negatively affect those of us who live on streets with left turn lanes?
- A:** The impact indicated on the traffic model shows a range of plus or minus 20% in traffic volume changes based on vehicle kilometre travelled on those streets. The changes for each street will be unique.
- Q:** Consider the businesses at Harbourfront. Everything there died when a right-of-way was introduced. How come you are pushing the streetcar issue when you could put buses on St. Clair? What about the cost of off-street parking? I do not appreciate traffic being directed to my street.
- A:** Harbourfront is not a commercial area, it is not a retail strip. Any economic changes to the area are not related to the streetcar. There is a budget the Parking Authority has set aside for parking issues on St. Clair. Councillor Mihevc was able to secure a new parking lot in the Bathurst area. Buses will not be used on St. Clair because it costs a lot more to replace the streetcars with buses than it does to improve streetcar services. There are no spare buses that could be used on St. Clair. Also, a new garage would be needed to house buses. Buses carry fewer people, which would not solve the issue of improving transit. The City of Toronto has a preference to use the streetcar. The effects on side street volumes will be minimal. However, we will identify traffic calming measures should they become necessary in the future.
- Q:** I support Alternative 6 because it addresses safety issues. Have you seen the SOS idea with no platforms used? We need to increase the importance of the safety issue.
- A:** We have very few instances of pedestrians being hit by cars. This is not a huge problem. Platforms ensure a safe place to get on and off the streetcar. There are instances where cars do not stop, and that is where safety risks are increased without platforms.
- Q:** The loss of revenue for 200 lost parking spaces is equal to about \$5,000 a day. And we are only gaining ten minutes for streetcars? Is there a maximum speed limit for streetcars? Toronto always eliminated streetcars in the past. What about ice and rain? Does that affect the tracks? Test this system. Tape off the street so no cars can use the streetcar lane and see how that works.
- A:** The speed limit for streetcars is the same as other vehicles on the road. If the streetcars could travel at posted speeds, they could make up time. We have tested that proposal on King Street and no one obeyed it. Cars still drove in the streetcar lane when it was taped off.
- C:** I came here tonight against the right-of-way, but came with an open mind. There are stereotypes in the room, involving who wants what out of this process. This creates tension among community residents. Those for the streetcar are also for the community. Those against the right-of-way are also for the TTC. We all want to preserve our community. It starts right now. We need to talk to each other. We need to overcome our division.

- Q:** What about the economic impact that St. Clair will undergo? Joanna said the impact will be neutral. You're moving the lanes. When we come home from work, we need to find parking spaces to shop. How will we do our shopping with no parking? Who are your surveyors? Who did your research?
- A:** We have done a detailed economic impact assessment. Our economist, Hans Vanpoorten, works for Marshall Macklin Monaghan. We did detailed surveys of businesses. First, we did a mail-out survey to 1,100 businesses. We only got a 20% response rate. After that we did two customer surveys on-site.
- C:** I am a 40 year resident of the area. Streetcars are old technology. They need to travel at 80km or more to be efficient. We pay taxes to use the road. The migration of traffic from the suburbs to the city is the problem, not the local traffic. We need new subway lines! Buses are the best alternative because they can run on vegetable oil and they are cheaper than streetcars.
- C:** What is the latest incarnation of Alternative 6? Between the 14th to 21st of June, the plan changed. When will you come up with final plan? In this TTC flyer, one of the myths is that rumours are passing that everyone is opposed to the right-of-way. That's not the case. The TTC has collected information praising the right-of-way. But 80% don't understand what's going on. On my own street I have asked my neighbours what they think. Over 50% oppose the proposed right-of-way.
- Q:** Looking at the 'Next Steps' slide, what degree of variability remains in the plan before it goes to council? Is there still variability?
- A:** We will discuss with community associations, and any interested parties about design issues, parking concerns etc. to work out something that will provide adequate tradeoffs. The plan to council will be finalized by the end of July. This is not a detailed design exercise and there will likely be changes after the plan goes to council.
- C:** I commend the TTC on a good report and presentation. I fully support the proposed right-of-way. This is not a suburban street, this is an urban street.
- C:** I want to thank and commend the study team. It is clear to me that no one came to have their minds changed. I would like to see the EA team provide comment sheets to everyone who wants one. Those who have comment sheets please fill them out and submit them. If you haven't said anything, your opportunity will be lost. We have to be neighbours at the end of this process. We have to live with what the majority wants.
- R:** Comments sheets will be on the project website. We can also put copies in the local libraries if you would like.
- Q:** I've been driving in the city for 45 years. St. Clair is the only street we can use as service drivers. Why not take St. Clair, make the right-of-way to streetcar tracks just effective during rush hour. Don't block up the rest of the street. In winter, when snow is piled on the curb, we will lose one lane.
- A:** We have done an analysis on the current situation. We think a part time right-of-way really won't work. The peak time for streetcars being delayed due to left turns is between 11am-3pm. There are still good service levels for traffic.

Q: I was really surprised to get an update in the mail that says our concerns as residents are myths. In the TTC report it states that the capacity of traffic will result in delays, and increased infiltration into the area. The TTC and City staff has not given us the information we need to make informed decisions.

A: We have been providing traffic analysis data. We have given you that data at every step of the way.

C: At a meeting we had with Joe Mihevc, he said if there were any sidewalks to be cut up, he would not support the plan. I would like him to answer that. (Note: Councillor Mihevc was not in attendance at this point in the meeting).

Q: You say that EMS vehicles would have easier access to get to houses with Alternative 6? How are they going to get around the right of way? Or will they also have to go to a traffic signal to turn?

A: We are working with EMS to ensure that with the design of any right-of-way, they will have the use of a wide open lane. They will work with us to come up with a solution that works best for everyone.

Q: What about snow in winter, will we lose a lane due to snow?

A: The City needs to plow here just as they do other streets.

C: We, residents and all 5 BIAs who live on St.Clair Avenue, do not want a dedicated right-of-way, so why have you spent close to \$600,000 on an EA process that is biased, unprofessional, and unacceptable.

Q: I am familiar with Spadina. I'm an avid TTC user and a landscape architect. I believe in public transit, but I fail to understand why the TTC is putting so much effort into proving this solution. They are only promising a one minute time savings. It is essential to maintain balance within a community. The elements and deciding factors need to be considered equally. When one element is given precedence over all others, the balance is lost. Do you want to save a minute? Or do you want to have large sidewalks and a safe community?

A: We have put a considerable level of effort into this project. This is not the only street that we are looking at for transit priority. We are doing four other studies now on transit priority. One minute travel time savings is not the correct number, and that is not the issue here. The long waits, bunching and reliability are what we want to address.

The meeting ended around 10:30 p.m.

Additional questions and comments were captured on flip charts. Due to time constraints, there was no opportunity for them to be read aloud or responded to. The unanswered flipchart questions are as follows:

Q: Both sides are passionate about what is right for St. Clair. If the right-of-way proves detrimental to the area, what is the plan and budget to rectify it and how soon will this happen?

Q: Why don't you have streetcar lanes for streetcars only during rush hours and advanced green for left-hand turns?

- Q: On Monday (June 21st) at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, a display board showed how people “voted” for the various alternatives. Why were people at the public meetings not notified that there was a “voting” process in place? This was not shown as a vote at this meeting. We were not informed that this was a voting process; we were just asked to make comments NOT “vote”.
- Q: Councillor Joe Mihevc, you stated that you would not support any proposal that would eliminate not one or any on-street parking. Where is the validity of this statement when the dedicated right-of-way proposal eliminates on-street parking?
- Q: True community consultation listens as well as lectures, this process has become polarized and the cost of this is a reasonable sensitive design process which builds consensus through a true workshop process seeking to find balance between all users of the street. The street is a living organism because this process is controlled by one dominant interest, the balance of use in the neighbourhood will be lost in favour of the TTC.