

10.0 MITIGATING MEASURES AND NET EFFECTS

10.1 Mitigating Measures

Mitigating measures are those required to minimize any adverse effects of the undertaking during or after construction of the project. These fall into the categories of effects related to construction, economic effects, and potential neighbourhood traffic infiltration. The mitigating measures defined in each category are as follows.

10.1.1 Construction Mitigation/Business Outreach

The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Report indicated that the construction period is the primary period of concern with respect to the impacts on the business community. It can be expected that there may be some small independent businesses, which could be affected by the reduction in access during construction.

The following mitigation measures are proposed to address the construction impacts on local business:

- 1) Definition and implementation of a business outreach program during construction. The TTC and City are committed to working with the local business community to minimize the effects of construction, through the following actions:
 - a) Scheduling and staging the construction by section of the street so as to avoid peak sales seasons. For example, sections of the street with numerous outdoor cafes could be scheduled for reconstruction outside the prime summer months when the cafes would have their highest demand;
 - b) Maintaining vehicular access along St. Clair Avenue in each direction throughout the process. At least one traffic lane in each direction will be kept operational at all times;
 - c) Providing notification of upcoming construction activity by means of construction newsletters and bulletins, so that business owners can schedule deliveries appropriately and take needed preparatory measures;
 - d) Maintaining city services such as garbage pickup;
 - e) Maintaining sidewalk access throughout the construction periods;
 - f) Accelerating construction schedules by carrying out certain works 24 hours per day, seven days a week as appropriate (specifics will be determined upon consultation with the community);

- g) Establishing construction staging areas and organizing set-up of materials so as to minimize the period of disruption along St. Clair Avenue. For example, track is welded into long sections off-street, then pulled into place. That speeds up the construction process;
 - h) Maintaining a community liaison construction officer on-site, who will be committed to addressing business issues. This officer will introduce him or herself to the stakeholders at community meetings. These meetings will serve as briefings on the project timing and activities;
 - i) Encouraging construction staff and local residents to patronize local businesses; and,
 - j) Developing a communication plan to ensure that the public is aware of the activities, location and the schedule of the construction. The plan will include a project website and contact telephone number(s).
- 2) This business outreach program will be developed and disseminated with the assistance of the local business community on St. Clair Avenue prior to construction, so that they understand the opportunities to work with the TTC and City during the construction period; and
- 3) Investigation of the potential to temporarily introduce permit parking on both sides of local streets (where the width of the street permits), to provide greater certainty that residents who depend on on-street parking can find it in close proximity to home. This measure would be introduced between Bathurst Street and Old Weston Road, with the areas to be determined based on discussions with the local ratepayer organizations. It would be in place only while construction is actively underway on the adjacent section of St. Clair Avenue.

10.1.2 Economic Impact Mitigation

The socio-economic impact assessment indicated that the primary factor of concern for the business community, aside from the construction period, was the effect of on-street parking loss. The following mitigation measures address that issue:

- 1) Creation of off-street parking lots. The Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) is committed to building off-street parking lots during the 2005/2006 period in locations where parking is needed along St. Clair Avenue, to replace the approximately 40 spaces lost on-street. These parking lots are proposed to be located within the area between Lansdowne Avenue and Bathurst Street;

- 2) Introduction of additional on-street parking spaces on streets connecting to St. Clair Avenue. For example, a total of seven new spaces has been identified on Robina Avenue, in the centre of the commercial area;
- 3) Improvement to the availability of on-street parking in the area of J.J. Picinnini Community Centre. The Toronto Parking Authority is planning to convert the on-street spaces on St. Clair Avenue between Lansdowne Avenue and Caledonia Road to 'pay and display'. This will decrease the average parking duration for these spaces, thus making them available for use by more shoppers.

Other mitigating measures related to the potential economic effects of the undertaking are outlined as follows:

- 4) Investigation of further possibilities to minimize sidewalk cuts and to add sidewalk space where possible during detailed design, particularly near signalized intersections and in commercial areas;
- 5) Investigation of the potential to introduce timed transfers for the streetcar service. This would allow those traveling for shopping and other services along St. Clair Avenue to pay one fare within a two-hour period. The timed transfer program noted above would be continued for one year following construction, to assist the businesses to recover from any potential adverse effects during construction;
- 6) As approved by City Council at its meeting on September 28, 29, 30 and October 1:
 - a) City departments will waive fees related to hosting community festivals on St. Clair Avenue West from 2005 to 2007 (the construction period and immediately thereafter);
 - b) Economic Development's Small Business and Local Partnership staff, working with local BIAs, will support a "Shop St. Clair" campaign during the construction period; and;
 - c) Businesses along St. Clair Avenue will be entitled to apply for the Commercial Façade program, starting in 2005. The Economic Development staff will forward a budget request to this end through the 2005 capital budget process.

10.1.3 Monitoring of Traffic Conditions

The transportation impact assessment of the preferred Design Concept, summarized in Chapter 9, indicated that changes to vehicle traffic on side streets in the study area are expected, ranging from a decrease of 17 percent to an increase of 8 percent compared to

current values. Increases were projected only on side streets between Bathurst Street and Avoca Avenue. Based on these projected changes, traffic monitoring should be undertaken for a period of one year beyond the completion of construction in the area between Bathurst Street and Avoca Avenue, north and south of St. Clair Avenue. In particular, Heath Street should be monitored because it is a parallel route in proximity to St. Clair Avenue. South of St. Clair Avenue, Alcina Avenue, Benson Avenue and Rosemount Avenue form a continuous parallel route. This route should be monitored; this was noted as a potential sensitivity by local stakeholders (though the computer modelling did not reveal any concern).

This traffic monitoring program would be undertaken by the City's Transportation Services Division. The monitoring program related to local traffic impacts will be an ongoing initiative. It is not possible to be definitive at this time regarding the specific measures (such as turn prohibitions or traffic calming) that would be implemented as a result of the monitoring program, because the exact nature and magnitude of the traffic effects is uncertain. However, Transportation Services staff will work with Ward Councillors and the community to address any local traffic issues.

10.2 Commitments to Future Work

During the course of the Environmental Assessment process several important issues were identified that will need to be addressed during detailed design and construction. Some of these issues were identified earlier in this Section: The following additional commitments during detailed design and construction were proposed by the project team, and/or directed by City Council at its meeting of September 28, 29, 30 and October 1, 2004:

- 1) Staff of the City of Toronto Urban Development Services and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism departments will develop a proposal to engage the local arts communities to provide input on the development of a public art program and themes for St. Clair Avenue West, and report back to Council by December 2004 for approval;
- 2) Staff of the City's Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department, in consultation with the City's Urban Development Services Department (Urban Design section), the City's Tree Advocate and project design team, will jointly develop a detailed implementation plan for landscaping along St. Clair Avenue West, with particular attention to creating viable tree plantings and associated attractive tree-pit containers, where possible, and report back to Council upon completion of the detailed design;

- 3) A “Beautiful St. Clair Committee” will be established in order to facilitate the above mentioned Staff recommendations;
- 4) A community design consultation group consisting of representatives of the St. Clair Avenue West business community, residents and other stakeholders will be established to work with the project team to provide input during the detailed process; The Consultation Group will participate in all streetscape enhancements, urban design decisions, streetcar shelter and platform design and public art decisions, and this group will include and be co-chaired by the four local City Councillors and report to the Commissioner of Urban Development Services;
- 5) Responsibility for winter maintenance (i.e. snow plowing) of the transit lanes should be clearly defined in an agreement between the City and the TTC, to ensure that the lanes are kept in safe, useable condition, for both transit and emergency vehicles, at all times of the year.

Items to be Reported

City Council also directed Staff to report or further review several additional items, which may potentially result in additional commitments during design and construction. These are:

1. The impact to businesses with respect to garbage collection on St. Clair Avenue West during road reconstruction;
2. An alternative to apply vehicle lane widths on Queen Street West to St. Clair Avenue West, and use the gained space for bicycles and/or wider sidewalks;
3. Expropriation and other related costs of each property required as a result of the Council-approved report
4. Advancing the goals and objectives of the Council-adopted report prepared by the St. Clair Avenue West revitalization Committee (SWRC) entitled “Our Future Together: A Community Based Revitalization Strategy for St. Clair Avenue West, the resources that can be provided by those departments, and the project budget to support the goals and objectives;
5. TTC report on:
 - ways to make the City’s streetcars accessible;

- the requirement for new streetcars to replace the aging fleet as it pertains to the projected 25-year life cycle of the St. Clair Avenue streetcar right-of-way; and
- implementing full bus transit services from Gunns Road to Scarlett Road.

Items for Staff Review or Action

1. Review the on-street and off-street parking supply along St. Clair Avenue West with the goal of maintaining or increasing the existing parking supply;
2. TTC liaise with GO Transit, in consultation with the Acting Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services and the Commissioner of Urban Development Services, to ensure that the construction period does not negatively coincide with the GO Transit Rail-to-Rail Grade Separation diamond construction near Old Weston Road, which will require a substantial number of road closures;
3. The Toronto Parking Authority be requested to continue to ensure that parking rates remain affordable at current rates for five (5) years following completion of construction.

10.3 Next Steps

As authorized by City Council, the Environmental Study Report will be filed in the public record for a minimum 30-day review period. During this period, individuals, interest groups or government agencies may request that a Part II Order be issued. Once Environmental Assessment approval is received, the construction of the recommended design can proceed.

The St. Clair West Transit Improvements project includes a property acquisition component. Given the current project schedule and statutory requirements for the balance of the EA process, authority has been granted at this time to proceed with acquisition and initiate expropriation procedures if required, in order that these processes may run concurrently with detailed design of the project. Once further details of the acquisitions are confirmed, they will be reported to the Works, Administration and/or Policy and Finance Committee as required.

10.4 Net Effects

The measures cited above are expected to mitigate against all projected negative impacts of consequence. The net effects of the project are expected to be negligible following implementation of these measures.

It should be noted that the monitoring program related to traffic impacts on local streets would be an ongoing initiative of the City of Toronto. It is not possible to be absolutely definitive regarding the specific measures (such as turn prohibitions or addition of traffic calming elements [e.g. speed humps]) that would be implemented as a result of the monitoring program, because the exact nature and magnitude of the traffic effects is uncertain to some degree. However, the commitment is to have no net negative effect, and the traffic measures would be designed to meet that commitment.

The proposed undertaking will maintain the existing traffic capacity on St. Clair Avenue, while providing a significant improvement to the reliability and quality of transit service. At constrained intersections, the undertaking includes improvements to reduce congestion. The proposed plan includes enhancements to improve pedestrian safety and comfort, through enhanced platforms and shelters, and enhanced pedestrian crossing designs. The undertaking is not projected to have any negative effects on the St. Clair residential and business communities. Based on the comprehensive case study review of similar transit projects in other cities and the “before and after” review of the Spadina Streetcar, the proposal is expected to have a neutral or positive effect on business activity.

Development of the proposed undertaking (and the associated consultation) has been the catalyst for a broader plan of infrastructure renewal on St. Clair Avenue, incorporating new street lighting, plantings, streetscape improvements and other elements. In that way, it fulfills the mandate of the Problem Statement. It also represents progress toward the goals of the St. Clair West Revitalization Committee, as defined in their 2002 report: to “improve community connections between the components of the area; create an identity ... as an important employment, commercial and cultural area; encourage a diverse and interesting mix of retail; create an attractive and safe public realm”.

The improvement in transit service achievable through this proposal, and sustainable in the long term, is expected to bring positive environmental benefits to the area, attract more shoppers and pedestrians, encourage reduced automobile dependency in the area and beyond, and contribute towards a more people-friendly environment on St. Clair Avenue West.

10.5 Conclusions

The need to replace the streetcar tracks on St. Clair Avenue West presents the City of Toronto with the opportunity to reassess the function and design of this important corridor in terms of both local community revitalization objectives and wider city-building goals. Council recognized the prospects for positive change and, in February 2003, approved funding for the St. Clair Avenue West Transit Improvements Class Environmental Assessment (EA) study.

At the local level, there is a pressing need to upgrade the 512 St. Clair streetcar service and, at the same time, create a more pleasant and inviting pedestrian environment to strengthen and invigorate activities along the street.

The transportation planning policies of the Official Plan recognize that in a mature city like Toronto, the emphasis has to be on using the available road space more efficiently by encouraging more people to travel by transit to reduce congestion, pollution and energy consumption. This requires enhancing the attractiveness of bus and streetcar services by improving their frequency, speed, reliability, convenience and comfort.

A key means of bringing about surface transit improvements is by giving greater priority to buses and streetcars on City roads. This has proven to be the only workable and sustainable approach in the world's major cities – London, New York, Hong Kong, Berlin, and Paris - and is the approach advocated in the recommendations of the EA study for St. Clair Avenue West.

The terms of reference for the St. Clair Avenue West Transit Improvements EA reflect the larger significance of the project. Although focussing on the primary issue of improvements to the quality of transit service and operations, the study also pays considerable attention to a host of related issues which include: business impacts; the needs of other road users; pedestrian safety; environmental concerns, and urban design features.

The EA study was undertaken in accordance with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process, which imposes a number of formal requirements on the study process. Public involvement has been a vital and ongoing part of the study process and the project team has exceeded the legislated requirements for public participation. Notably, the project team worked closely with the community by engaging in more than 50 public meetings, workshops, and many informal stakeholder meetings, plus thousands of contacts (by e-mails, letters, phone calls and web-site hits), in a combined effort to identify opportunities for the revitalization and “beautification” of St. Clair Avenue West.

The section of St. Clair Avenue West between Yonge Street and Gunns Road (just west of Keele Street) is made up of a number of vibrant and diverse residential, business and institutional communities that have expressed a wide range of interests and views on the streetcar project.

Throughout the evaluation process, the project team focussed on responding to specific local concerns. The result is a Preferred Design Concept which is very mindful of the need to take into account community issues, concerns and aspirations. In particular, the recommended design concept has been continually adjusted and refined to address key concerns expressed by individuals in the community. These related to: possible “barrier effects”; potential loss of on-street parking; threat of adverse effects on businesses; reduced access for emergency vehicles; capacity for current traffic volumes on St. Clair Avenue West; traffic infiltration on local streets, and reductions in sidewalk widths. It was critical to deal with these concerns in developing an alternative that, on balance, offers the greatest net benefits.

The Preferred Design Concept brings a number of benefits which extend beyond those strictly related to improving streetcar service on St. Clair Avenue West. Among these are significant improvements to the “public realm” as a result of enhancements to the streetscape and other design features.

The City of Toronto is poised to make a fundamental statement about the way it envisages this City and its communities growing and developing. Upgrading transit service on St. Clair Avenue West, by giving priority to streetcars, indicates a commitment to reducing auto dependency and creating a more liveable, people-friendly, attractive and sustainable City. Improved streetcar service on St. Clair Avenue West supports the land use planning objectives of seeing this corridor develop as a vibrant, mixed-use “Avenue” where the emphasis is more on the quality of the pedestrian environment and improving the person-carrying capacity of the corridor than it is on the accommodation of traffic.

This transit project also presents an early opportunity for City Council to act on one of its Term Priorities by helping to beautify the City. In this way, the St. Clair Avenue West Transit Improvements project has the potential to deliver a showcase example of the best of what this City can be.