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## **1.0 PROJECT SUMMARY**

### **1.1 The Environmental Study Report**

The purpose of this Environmental Study Report (ESR) is to document the process and findings of the St. Clair Avenue West Transit Improvements Class Environmental Assessment.

The report is organized as follows:

1. Project Summary
2. Introduction and Study Process
3. Public Consultation
4. Existing Conditions
5. Future Conditions
6. Needs Assessment
7. Identification of Alternative Solutions
8. Evaluation of Alternative Solutions
9. Evaluation of Design Alternatives and Preferred Design Concept
10. Mitigating Measures and Net Effects

The appendices include information on the Environmental Assessment process, presentation materials and data from workshops and public meetings, forms from various surveys completed for this project, technical definitions and data as well as case study information.

### **1.2 Background**

The origins of the study date back to May 7, 2002, when Humber York Community Council directed the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services (Works), in

consultation with Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and other City departments, to report on the feasibility of establishing a dedicated streetcar right-of-way on St. Clair Avenue West. At that time, the TTC had already identified the reconstruction of the streetcar tracks on St. Clair Avenue, between Yonge Street and Gunns Road, in its capital program for 2004. The Transportation Services, Sections of Works had also identified St. Clair Avenue for road reconstruction in 2004. Over the previous few years, a number of requests had been made by various Councillors to generally improve the physical environment for streetcar customers along St. Clair Avenue.

Works and TTC staff undertook a preliminary evaluation of the feasibility of establishing a streetcar right-of-way and prepared a Staff Report, dated November 28, 2002, that was considered at City Council on February 4, 2003. The Staff Report recommended the following:

1. approval be given to undertake an environmental assessment regarding the establishment of an exclusive right-of-way for streetcars on St. Clair Avenue, between Yonge Street and Gunns Road, and the extension of the 512 St. Clair streetcar route, in an exclusive right-of-way, from Gunns Road to Jane Street, with such work to be carried out by consultants under the direction of City of Toronto Transportation Services and TTC staff;
2. this report be forwarded to Councillors Betty Disero, Joe Mihevc, Frances Nunziata, and Michael Walker, and the affected Business Improvement Associations for their information; and
3. the appropriate City and TTC officials be requested to take whatever action is necessary to give effect thereto, including the introduction in Council of any Bills that are required.

Consequently, City Council, at its meeting of February 4, 2003, approved these recommendations subject to the following:

- a. the environmental assessment being limited to only those sections of the proposed right-of-way which are confirmed to require an environmental assessment, and any sections of the proposed right-of-way which are found to not require an environmental assessment undergoing a separate City-Toronto Transit Commission study; and
- b. approval of the TTC's 2003 Operating Budget.

In May 2003, a request for proposals was issued by the TTC to conduct an environmental assessment to investigate transit improvements for St. Clair Avenue West between Yonge

Street and Gunns Road. In August 2003, Marshall Macklin Monaghan, along with specialist sub-consultants, was awarded a consulting contract by TTC to carry out the environmental assessment.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Project

The modernization and upgrading of transit service on St. Clair Avenue West is a priority for the City of Toronto and TTC, for a number of key reasons:

- The streetcar tracks and trackbed on St. Clair Avenue West are in very poor condition and must be replaced. The track reconstruction, originally scheduled for 2004, was delayed to 2005. This allowed for the opportunity to review possible enhancements to the streetcar line and roadway as part of broader overall improvements for St. Clair Avenue.
- The streetcar platforms on St. Clair Avenue are narrow and in poor condition. Any transit upgrade should increase the platform width and amenities to provide a safer and more inviting environment.
- The St. Clair Avenue streetcar carries almost half of the total person trips travelling along St. Clair during peak periods. Its daily ridership levels are fourth highest of all streetcar routes, carrying 32,000 riders per weekday and 28,000 per weekend. The streetcar service currently experiences significant interference from private automobiles sharing the right-of-way, thus limiting the TTC's ability to provide reliable, "on-time" service. Many customers experience delays of 15 minutes or more and, in the worst cases, delays of over an hour. The unpredictable service severely limits the potential for the streetcar service to attract new riders today and in the future as the congestion associated with automobile trips worsen.
- St. Clair Avenue already experiences congestion associated with automobile traffic during peak periods and therefore has limited excess capacity to accommodate growth in automobile travel. Travel along the St. Clair Avenue corridor is expected to grow by 14% by 2021 (6,800 peak period trips). This growth cannot be accommodated exclusively by automobile.
- The Toronto Official Plan promotes city-building initiatives and identifies St. Clair Avenue West as one of many "Avenues" where growth in the City is to be focused over the next 30 years. One of the key features of "Avenues" is their designation for transit priority and potential higher-order transit service in order to promote use of transit and reduce dependence on the automobile for travel within the City.

- There are a number of community-based revitalization initiatives underway that can benefit from this project, which will help advance identified urban design and streetscaping enhancements.
- This project provides City departments and other City agencies the opportunity to advance planned projects and programs which are intended to enhance St. Clair Avenue through improved urban design. The improved urban design includes parks, streetlighting, and public art as part of an overall plan to redesign the street for its many users.

## 1.4 General Project Description

The Preferred Design Concept, which features exclusive transit lanes on St. Clair Avenue West, between Avoca Avenue and Gunns Road, includes the following principal elements:

- (i) Two centre lanes reserved for exclusive use by streetcars (and emergency vehicles) protected by a raised, but mountable, trackbed;
- (ii) During peak periods, two general purpose traffic lanes in each direction, located on either side of the streetcar tracks, providing sufficient capacity to accommodate all current traffic volumes on St. Clair;
- (iii) During off-peak periods and weekends, one general purpose traffic lane and one parking lane in each direction, providing sufficient capacity to accommodate all current off-peak and weekend traffic volumes;
- (iv) Left-turns lanes at signalized intersections to permit left-turn and U-turns on their own exclusive signal phases;
- (v) On-street parking on both sides of the street during off-peak times on weekdays and at all times on weekends along the majority of the curb lanes, and new off-street parking, resulting in a net increase in the parking supply along St. Clair Avenue West; and
- (vi) Enhanced streetscape, urban design, streetcar shelters and platforms, public art and safety features as part of the overall design and implementation of this transit improvement project.

A detailed plan of the 6.8 kilometre route is discussed in Chapter 9 and is shown in the design plates included in this volume. The plan shows intersection designs, streetcar lanes, streetcar platform locations, traffic lanes, on-street parking locations, and traffic signal locations.