

## Environmental Assessment for Changes to York and Bay Ramps of Gardiner Expressway

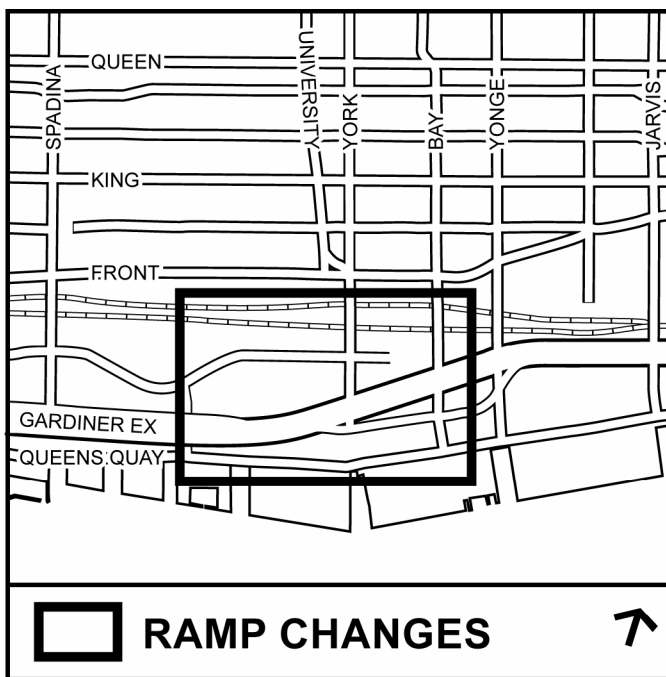
<b>Date:</b>	June 12, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>From:</b>	Richard Butts, Deputy City Manager
<b>Wards:</b>	Trinity-Spadina, Ward 20 Toronto Centre – Rosedale, Ward 28
<b>Reference Number:</b>	<b>P:\2008\Cluster B\WF\ec08005</b>

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council authority for the General Manager, Transportation Services, to conduct a Class Environmental Assessment Study (Class EA) of potential modifications to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp and the Bay Street eastbound on ramp of the elevated Gardiner Expressway.

The objective of the potential modifications will be to support and enhance improvements in the pedestrian realm proposed in the York Street and Bay Street Pedestrian Promenade Plans, and to improve cycling connections, public spaces and parks.

It is anticipated that the Class EA will be completed and presented to City Council for its review and approval in twelve to eighteen months. The York and Bay Street ramp changes and any related improvements to York Off Ramp Park would be financed through the Capital Program for Waterfront Revitalization.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Deputy City Manager whose responsibilities include the waterfront recommends that City Council:

1. Authorize the General Manager, Transportation Services to undertake a Class Environmental Assessment Study to examine potential modifications to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off-ramp and the Bay Street eastbound on-ramp of the Gardiner Expressway;
2. Request that the Waterfront Project Director, when reporting to Council on the updated Waterfront Long Term Funding Plan in the Fall of 2008, include funding for both EA costs and the costs of implementing potential modifications to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp and Bay Street eastbound on ramp of the Gardiner Expressway, and the improvement of York Off Ramp Park; and
3. Authorize and direct appropriate City officials to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

### **Financial Impact**

The financial impact of this report is the cost of the potential modifications to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp and the Bay Street eastbound on ramp of the Gardiner Expressway, and the improvements to York Off Ramp Park. These costs will include the environmental assessment, design, demolition, and construction to implement the ramp modifications and the upgraded York Off Ramp Park. The preliminary estimate of these costs is \$25.0 million to \$30.0 million and will be refined during the environmental assessment process.

Funds exist within the Capital Program for Waterfront Revitalization to undertake these initiatives. The Waterfront Project Director is requested to report to Council in the Fall of 2008 with an updated Long-Term Funding Plan for the Waterfront that includes funding for the York/Bay/Yonge Streets and Bay Streets ramp modifications, and for the York Off Ramp Park improvements. Transportation Services will commence the Class Environmental Assessment Study once the review of Long-Term Funding Plan for the Waterfront that includes funding for the York/Bay/Yonge Streets and Bay Streets ramp modifications has been endorsed by Council.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

### **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on November 27, 2007, Toronto and East York Community Council, in considering Clause TE11.5, endorsed the York Street Pedestrian Promenade Plan, including the Action Items for Plan Implementation. For the potential changes to the

York Street off ramp and right turn channel, Transportation Services was to report in 2008 on options for improving the pedestrian environment at the southeast corner of York Street and Harbour Street, including modifications to, or removal of, the eastbound Gardiner ramp to Harbour Street. The full clause can be viewed at: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/te/decisions/2007-11-27-te11-dd.pdf>.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In 1987, the former City of Toronto completed a comprehensive study of potential modifications to the Gardiner Expressway ramps in the downtown area, titled the Central Bayfront Ramp Study. The study recommended several modifications to the expressway ramps, but only the removal of the southbound Yonge Street to eastbound Gardiner Expressway ramp, combined with the existing northbound Bay Street to eastbound Gardiner Expressway ramp, has been implemented. One of the other ramp modifications proposed in the study was the shortening and re-configuration of the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp.

City Planning and Transportation Services staff have been developing plans to improve the pedestrian environment on the major routes between the downtown core and the waterfront area for several years. In addition to the York Street Pedestrian Promenade Plan approved by Toronto and East York Community Council, a Lower Yonge Street and Lower Bay Street Pedestrian Promenade plan has also been developed in conjunction with the review of the new development 18 Yonge Street and at 33 Bay Street. Modifications to the Gardiner Expressway ramps that intersect these streets have the potential to significantly improve these important pedestrian realms.

## **COMMENTS**

Preliminary concepts for proposed modifications to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp and the Bay Street eastbound on ramp are shown in Attachments 1 and 3 respectively. A concept for upgrades to the York Off Ramp Park is shown in Attachment 2. These proposed modifications basically include the following elements:

- Removal of the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp from York Street to its east end at Bay Street, including the loop ramp in the southeast corner of York Street and Harbour Street;
- Modification of the York/Bay/Yonge Streets eastbound off ramp west of York Street such that it terminates at the signalized intersection of York Street and Harbour Street;
- Closure of the Bay Street eastbound on ramp;
- Closure of the northbound curb lane on Bay Street between Harbour Street and the on ramp to the Gardiner Expressway; and
- Upgrades to the York Off Ramp Park.

The proposed York/Bay/Yonge Streets ramp modifications support the direction of the approved York Street Pedestrian Promenade Plan, and in fact were previously recommended in the former City of Toronto's 1987 Central Bayfront Ramp Study. The concept does not involve redirecting Gardiner Expressway traffic because it only alters the ramp design while maintaining all existing movements.

This proposal would significantly shorten the York off-ramp and improve the heavily used pedestrian connection along York Street to the waterfront. The pedestrian zones on adjacent streets such as Harbour Street from Lower Simcoe Street to Bay Street, and on the east side of York Street from Harbour Street to Queens Quay West, would also be enhanced.

Approximately 0.8 ha of York Off Ramp Park would be freed up by removing the expressway ramp currently located in the park. This would enable the park space to be upgraded, creating an improved waterfront park on Queens Quay West at the York slip.

The proposal to close the Bay Street on ramp and narrow northbound Bay Street would support the pedestrian promenade plan envisioned for Bay Street, by providing a wider and safer area for pedestrians on the east side of Bay Street between Harbour Street and Lake Shore Boulevard. This on ramp currently handles a relatively low volume of vehicles, with morning and afternoon peak hour volumes of approximately 200 and 340 vehicles respectively. In comparison, the Rees Street eastbound on ramp morning and afternoon peak hour volumes are both approximately 1,400 vehicles.

On this basis, City Planning, Transportation Services and Waterfront Secretariat staff are of the opinion that the proposed ramp improvements have technical merit, are consistent with City policies and directions, and therefore warrant further consideration. The estimated cost of modifying these two ramps, improving the adjacent streetscapes and improving York Off Ramp Park is in the range of \$25 to \$30 million.

## **Next Steps**

The proposed changes to the York/Bay/Yonge Streets and Bay Street ramps of the Gardiner Expressway require approval under the Environmental Assessment Act. The Transportation Services Division will initiate a Class EA study, the objective of which will be to further define the City's goals and objectives for the area, to develop and evaluate a reasonable range of alternative solutions to achieve those goals, and to consult with all interested stakeholders. It is anticipated that the Class EA will take twelve to eighteen months to complete. This timeframe allows for up to three months for EA review by the Ministry of the Environment. All recommendations arising from this study will be presented to City Council for its consideration and endorsement.

The concepts developed through the Class EA study should be taken to a preliminary design level of detail to more fully address their feasibility and costs. The EA analysis

should also include the identification of urban design elements and the development of all traffic management and construction staging plans.

This report was prepared by the City's Waterfront Secretariat, Transportation Services and City Planning Divisions in consultation with officials of Waterfront Toronto.

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## **SIGNATURE**

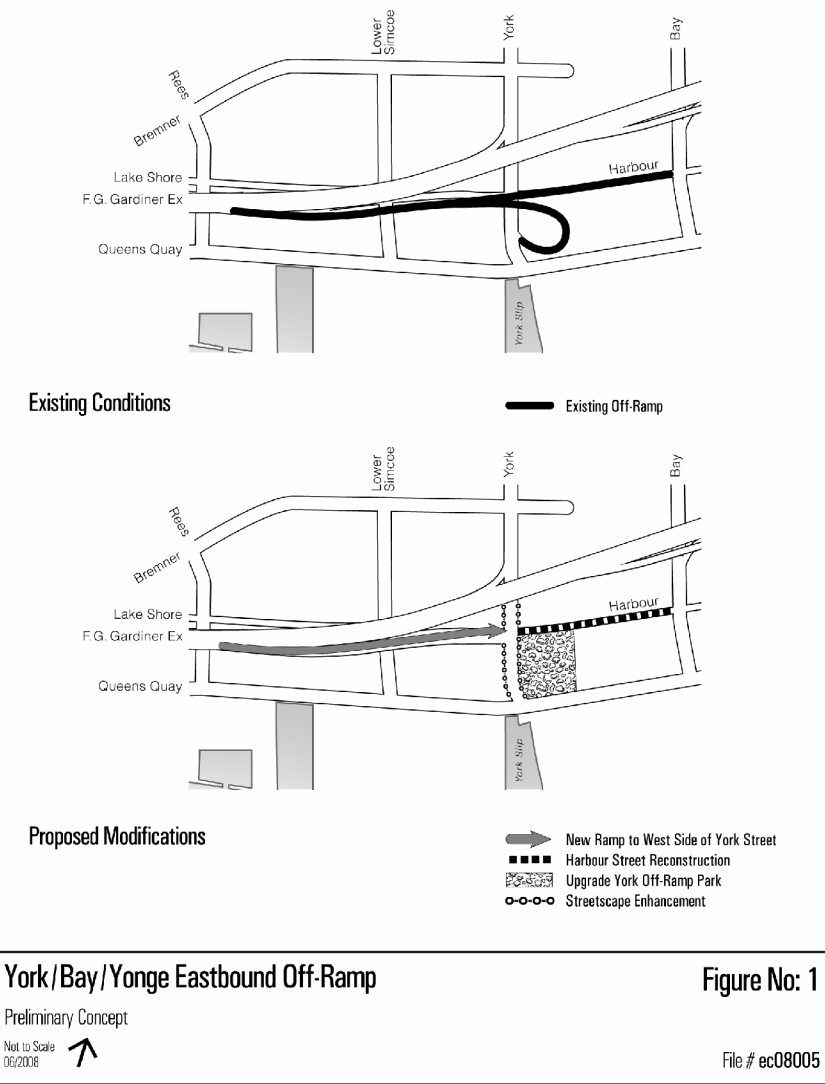
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Richard Butts, Deputy City Manager

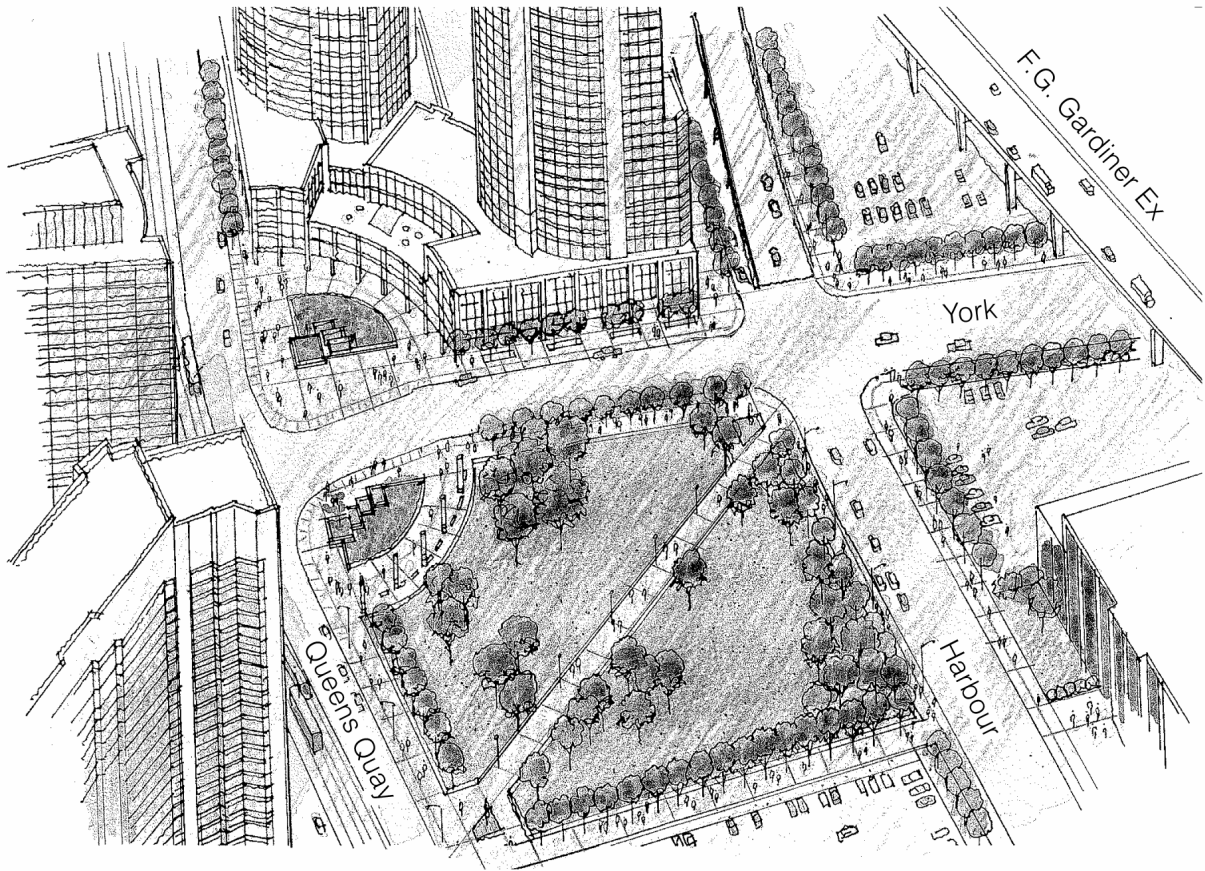
## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - York/Bay/Yonge Streets Eastbound Off Ramp  
Attachment 2 - Park Concept  
Attachment 3 - Bay Street Eastbound On Ramp

Attachment 1 – York/Bay/Yonge Streets Eastbound Off Ramp



## Attachment 2 – Park Concept



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### York Street Off-Ramp Park

Preliminary Concept

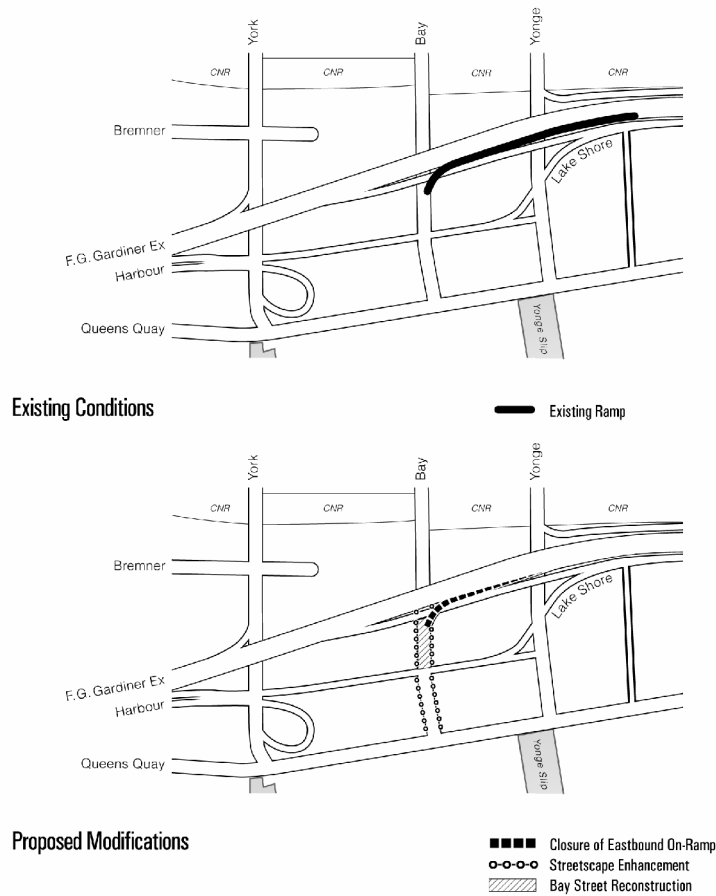
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## Attachment 3 – Bay Street Eastbound On Ramp



### Bay Street Eastbound On-Ramp

Preliminary Concept

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Figure No: 3

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