To members of the Government Management Committee
Re: Action item GM16.7, September 18, 2012

As representatives of the Danforth East Community Association (DECA), an inclusive, non-partisan residents' organization operating in the Danforth-Coxwell area, we are asking for a moratorium on land acquisition and piecemeal construction projects related to the Coxwell TTC station until a full planning study and a *meaningful* public consultation process has been completed.

With over 500 members, the Danforth East Community Association has worked hard over the past five years to promote neighbourhood revitalization and to make our streets more vibrant, walkable and safe. While we unanimously applaud efforts to make public transit more accessible to people with mobility problems, we object to the way the Coxwell Subway Station Easier Access Project is being handled on several fronts, namely:
1) A lack of public consultation
2) A piecemeal approach
3) A dire need for neighbourhood planning

An urban subway station should be a community focal point. If done properly, comprehensive mixed-use station renovations can be part and parcel of the neighbourhood revitalization, while delivering things such as a second exit (including an entrance) and elevator access in a less-disruptive and more cost-effective way.

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1) A Lack of Public Consultation

Like the controversial Subway Station Second Exits program that recently caused so much turmoil, Action Item 16.7 indicates a continued willingness by the city and TTC to forge ahead without real input from the community or consideration of the community context.

It seems a single public meeting was held on March 7, 2012. But when the responsible DECA representative couldn't attend, we were told not to worry because there would be more consultation in the fall. Now we learn on short notice that this issue is before the

Government Management Committee Sept. 18 and before City Council on Oct. 2. Is there a public consultation scheduled this week or next? Please let us know.

Moreover, the affected residents of Strathmore Blvd. and their lawyers were not notified that this item would be included at Tuesday's GMC meeting. The residents also tell us they have never been told by the TTC, despite years of discussion, that Coxwell station is on the 20-station priority list for the Second Exit program. It's safe to say these residents are concerned by the city and TTC's lack of communication and coordination on these and other matters.

2) A Piecemeal Approach

At this point, expropriating properties and digging for elevators on the front lawns of houses would be a costly piecemeal project done without regard for other imminent station needs and longer-term opportunities.

Coxwell station will eventually require a second exit for fire safety reasons. It is on the list of 20 priority stations whose design would force people into the tunnels should an emergency leave the current exit route full of smoke. It should be obvious that combining the Easier Access and Second Exit projects would save taxpayers a lot of money while considerably reducing disruption during construction.

And while we're on second exits, if we're serious about making them real public investments, we'll focus on ensuring they're entrances as well, and that they're as far as possible from the primary station building to maximize the size of each station's pedestrian catchment area. That's an essential issue for neighbourhood vitality and crucial for all people in Toronto concerned that we get the biggest bang for the buck from our capital and operating budgets.

3) A Dire Need for Neighbourhood Planning

Coxwell station may be shabby, it doesn't meet the fire code and it obviously doesn't serve handicapped people well. But DECA members and people who frequent the Coxwell-Danforth area also see lost opportunities, largely rooted in a troubled 50-year-old design.

We see a station remote from the Danforth strip – a standalone, single-use building on the backside of a block dominated by parking and one-storey retail. In comparison, the most

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efficient stations the world over, the ones that serve as neighbourhood hubs, tend to be the basement and foundations of mixed-use buildings.

Step back a little further and cross to the south side of Danforth, and the sense of incongruity with the official plan intensifies. Here we have a huge swath of potentially valuable land and buildings – owned by the TTC, no less – used largely as surface parking for employees and the storage of scrap metal and broken office furniture. We're talking about a publicly owned neighbourhood-deadening, largely derelict site within a stone's throw of a subway station. It's a hindrance to locals working to enhance street life and neighbourhood vitality. The obvious waste of public assets should also anger people in the 40 city wards that do not border the intersection Coxwell and Danforth Aves.

Making a priority of the concerns embraced by the city's official plan, linking land-use priorities with transit infrastructure, we can create conditions that make revitalization easier to achieve.

Let's stop this rush toward elevators and expropriations. Let's bring in help from the city planning department. Let's shift the focus from Coxwell station itself to the entire Coxwell-Woodington-Danforth-Strathmore block. Better still, let's look at this in the context of all four corners and all four affected wards. The Second Exit and Easier Access programs have laudable goals, but instead of looking at them in isolation and as expenditures, let's see how we can make them investments and opportunities. With a holistic approach to neighbourhood understanding, Coxwell station and the nearby TTC lands can be crucial catalysts for revival. That would be a win for the neighbourhood, a win for the city and a win for the TTC.

Sincerely,

Anita Schretlen
Chair, Danforth East Community Association

Stephen Wickens
Member of the Board, Danforth East Community Association

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