



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

OPEN STREETS TORONTO

Date:	March 31, 2014
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development & Culture Division
Wards:	13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 27, 28, 29, 30
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report outlines a proposed pilot project event, Open Streets Toronto to take place during the summer of 2014.

The report briefly summarizes the history of the event concept, official route being proposed and the consultation process thus far.

Comments were solicited from those City of Toronto Divisions/Agencies that would be impacted or required to provide support for the Open Streets Toronto program are included as part of the report.

Overall there is general support from City of Toronto Divisions and Agencies for the concept of an Open Streets Toronto however there are also serious concerns as to the current proposed route and the logistics, including Police staffing, surrounding it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. This report be received as information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting November 27, 28 and 29, 2012 City Council approved the Recreation Service Plan including a new recommendation approved by the Community Recreation Committee requesting the City Manager to investigate the feasibility of creating a "ciclovía" (now called Open Streets) in Toronto as part of the lead up to and as a legacy for Pan Am 2015.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.CD17.2>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The concept for an Open Streets program originated in Bogota, Colombia in the late 1970s and came to be called the Ciclovía (Cycle way). The program has inspired cities around the world, including, New York, Philadelphia, Guadalajara and Mexico City, to develop similar programs.

What is an Open Streets Program

Open Streets is defined as a community building and social engagement exercise that provides free recreational opportunities and public space for people to meet, interact, and make social connections. The intention is for people to enjoy the open streets as if they were a large, linear paved park to be used for jogging, walking, biking, skating, dancing, and a variety of health inspired programming that would animate the street.

<http://www.openstreetsto.org>

Open Streets Toronto Proposal

Open Streets Toronto would connect a variety of centrally-located neighbourhoods, iconic attractions and city parks on four Sunday mornings; July 27, August 3, 17 and 31, 2014. A minimum of 10 km of roadway would be closed. Open Streets Toronto is proposed to be an annual summer event.

Proposed roadways closures:

- Bloor St. from High Park (Bloor St. west and Parkside) in the west to Greenwood Avenue in the east.
- A southern loop running from Bloor St. south down Yonge St. to Queen St. then east to Church St. and then north up Church to Bloor St.
- Proposed route map attached as Attachment 1.
- <http://www.openstreetsto.org/#!/the-route/c1fz>

Organization and Funding

A yet to be incorporated Not for Profit Organization, Open Streets Toronto, plans to be the organizer of the Toronto program. Funding to execute the program would be solicited through corporate sponsorship and private funding.

8-80 Cities, a non-profit organization based in Toronto (<http://www.8-80cities.org/resources/ciclovia-open-streets.html>) has secured funding from the provincial Ministry of Tourism & Culture to help administer Open Streets programs in four cities during 2014. The four proposed cities are Toronto, Kingston, Windsor and Thunder Bay.

Consultation

In March of 2013, Ward 27 Councillor Kristin Wong-Tam's office, along with 8-80 Cities, held a meeting with City staff and external stakeholders who would be impacted by or required to execute a proposed Open Streets pilot program in Toronto in 2014.

The meeting gauged initial impressions and collected information on resources required and challenges anticipated if a program were to proceed. The following City Divisions and Agencies were represented:

- Economic Development and Culture
- Emergency Medical Services
- Municipal Licensing and Standards
- Pan Am 2015, City Managers Office
- Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- Public Realm Office
- TABIA (Toronto Area Business Improvement Association)
- Toronto Parking Authority
- Toronto Fire Services
- Toronto Police Services
- Toronto Public Health
- Transportation Services, Right of Way Management

An Open Streets information seminar was held in Toronto by the 8-80 Cities organization in November 2013 – Jacqueline White, Director, District 1 of Transportation Services and Michael Williams, General Manager of Economic Development & Culture were in attendance.

Councillors whose wards would be affected have been made aware the Open Streets Toronto proposal. Stephen Buckley, General Manager of Transportation Services and Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown were also consulted.

Further consultation is planned with local Business Improvement Associations in the wards impacted by the proposed Open Streets Toronto.

Permitting Process for Closing City Streets

The process to close any city street requires the applicant to submit a Street Events, Temporary Road Closure application to Transportation Services, Right of Way Management. Applications must be submitted at least 8 weeks prior to the requested closure date.

All applicants are required to provide the following information when submitting a Street Events, Temporary Road Closure application:

- Map/drawing or route of area impacted by closure and provide dimensions and indicate what items are being placed on the sidewalk or road
- Traffic Control and Public Safety Plan to ensure that Emergency Access is maintained as per guidelines
- Note disruptions to TTC, Street Parking, etc.
- Waste (Garbage) Management Plan
- General consultation with Transportation Services, Toronto Police, TTC, EMS, Municipal Licensing and Standards, Public Health, and other applicable agencies
- Consult with and provide written notice to impacted business, BIA and residents of potential closure with a copy to be provided to Transportation Services
- If serving alcohol, written documentation from AGCO and City of Toronto
- Insurance Certificate with minimum liability coverage of \$2 million, naming the City of Toronto as additional insured with a cross-liability clause
- Payment of the required permit fee and signage costs (if installed by City staff)
- Details of signs, barricades, cones, security, police, etc required per City staff direction

STAFF COMMENTS

City of Toronto Divisions/Agencies that would be impacted or required to provide support for the Open Streets Toronto program have provided comment on the proposed event:

Transportation Services, Right of Way Management

Although Transportation have been providing assistance for this event, there are a few concerns/details which have not been addressed to date and are essential for the proposal to move forward:

- Details/confirmation of current/proposed Road & Development construction affected by the route
- Support from the various BIA's and Area Councillors affected by route. (Written sign offs required)
- Proposed Notification (Residents, Business', Churches, etc.)
- Traffic Management Plan
 - Details on how the event will be facilitated, which must include the following:
 - Traffic product
 - Advisory Signage
 - Alternate Routes
 - Staff (i.e. Police, marshals, etc.)

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

EMS concerns regarding the closure are:

- Emergency access to the areas of the closure. This includes the streets, businesses and residences affected.
- Emergency access along the main streets which run across the area of closure.
- Access to hospitals (and specialty centres) on opposite sides of the closure areas.
- Reactions and safety of the public when paramedic vehicles are proceeding within the closure area to respond to emergency calls.
- Emergency access to TTC locations.
- Public safety in case of a multi-agency response within the closure area, including provisions for access in barricaded areas.
- Will there be any installations in the streets which may obstruct emergency access lanes?

Toronto Public Health (TPH)

TPH is very supportive of an Open Streets Program in Toronto as it provides an important form of accessible recreation and opportunity for residents and visitors to be physically active.

Health Benefits of Open Streets

Toronto Public Health is supportive of implementing an Open Streets program in Toronto. Evidence indicates Torontonians are not active enough to achieve health benefit. Physical activity is critical for health. Higher levels of physical activity, through increased cycling, walking and other forms of active transportation can significantly reduce an individual's risk of chronic diseases and premature death. Being physical active can reduce stress, improve mood and self esteem and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. By offering this free outdoor space, Open Streets encourages community residents, including those who may not have access to physical activity opportunities to be more physically active and take part in new types of exercise.

Walking is the most popular forms of physical activity and also one of the best and easiest ways for people to get their recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week. As well, people are more likely to participate in regular physical activity when there is a social component (e.g. sports or walking with friends). Also, research indicates where there were attempts to promote lifestyle changes to increase physical activity, initiatives that did not require facilities, such as walking, were more likely to result in long term changes.¹

Open Streets provide a long open space for walking and cycling making it ideal for people to be active. To date, there has not been systematic research on the impact of open streets on physical activity levels. However, Open Streets events have been shown to attract new people to walking and bicycling, while also benefiting local business and promoting community involvement. In some cities, physical activity programs were offered free of charge for the public as part of the Open Streets program as a way of

introducing participants to new activities such as dance aerobics (e.g. Zumba). Open Streets, especially if offered on a regular basis, e.g. weekly, could provide participants with opportunities to be more physically active and take part in new types of exercise in a social setting.²

1. Hillsdon, M. and Thorogood, M. A systematic review of physical activity promotion strategies. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*,30: 84-9
2. St Louis, Missouri, Open and shut: the case for Open Streets in St. Louis, 2011.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

Provided are issues the TTC would have with such road closures:

- Bloor St. \ Danforth Ave.; a closure prior to 9:00 a.m. on a Sunday impacts night \ early morning buses operating on the roadway (300 route) since subway operation does not commence until 9:00 a.m.
- Yonge St.; a closure prior to 9:00 a.m. on a Sunday impacts night \ early morning buses operating on the roadway (320 route) since subway operation does not commence until 9:00 a.m.
- Queen St.; the Yonge St. to Church St. closure requires 501 Queen streetcars to divert in both directions via Parliament St., King St., Spadina Ave. in both directions
- The Bloor St. \ Danforth Ave. closure; all north – south roadways where transit routes intersect with this roadway need to remain open to ensure transit service is provided south of the two roadways
- Yonge St.; east – west roadways where transit routes operate are to be maintained for transit service (particularly the streetcar routes of 505 & 506 \ 501 route may be required to divert onto King St. with a Queen St. closure

There are several concerns that will need to be worked through in order to accommodate this program. If the major roadways hosting the events can remain open until 9:00 a.m., the subway can then be utilized by those intending on attending the event as opposed to travelling via surface routes, where the buses will be required to divert around the closure, resulting with the attendees possibly walking significant distances.

Solid Waste Management (SWM)

Solid Waste Management has reviewed the Open Streets proposal and do not have any specific issue with this plan as long as the event organizer provides a waste management plan and has a comprehensive plan to address any major litter conditions during the event's operating hours.

Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

The Office of Emergency Management has reviewed the report and it seems fine from an emergency management perspective.

While the OEM is finalizing the "requirement" for event organizers to develop emergency plans it is suggested that event organizers take a pro-active approach and develop plans through the use of the Risk Management template OEM is proposing.

Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR)

Parks, Forestry and Recreation notes that the parks along the proposed segment/route of Bloor St. have various permitted events and sports scheduled over the proposed 4-Sunday event.

The proposed event, scheduled during the busy summer season, will create some access issues for these permit groups. Space to support Open Streets activities within these permitted parks may not be available.

Toronto Police Services (TPS)

Full Toronto Police Services report and comments is attached as *Attachment 2: Toronto Police Services Response to City Staff Information Report*

The Toronto Police Service reviewed the Open Streets Toronto proposal, and is very familiar with both the concept and the merits of this ciclovia-themed event; however, the span of the proposed locations for Open Streets Toronto far exceed the On Duty/Pay Duty staffing capabilities of the Toronto Police Service, especially during the peak event period.

They further state that work schedules have been comprehensively adjusted to accommodate World Pride, the Caribbean Cultural Festival, and several other large scale commitments with an impact on front line policing services.

Concerns were raised regarding timely access to the two Regional Trauma Centres in the downtown core because, unlike other successful Open Streets venues throughout the world, the lack of traffic alternatives pose significant challenges, especially given the population and traffic densities in Toronto, and the inherent risk management obligations that arise.

Toronto Fire Services (TFS)

- Even though numerous studies on traffic patterns have been done on this project in other cities, the Toronto traffic pattern study on the Open Street project may not turn out as predicted.
- The closed off street will not pose any problems in terms of response but the surrounding neighbourhood streets would definitely be congested
- The Gardiner rehabilitation project will add to the congestion, not to mention other Capital Works projects that are ongoing.
- The Gardiner project is estimating a 40% diversion of traffic. It would be advisable to see what the impact of the Gardiner Rehabilitation project would have before kickoff day of the Open Streets project

Municipal Licensing and Standards (Bylaw Enforcement)

- Need to consider potential impact the street closures would have on the vendors that hold permits on Bloor Street and its sidewalk.
- Municipal Licensing and Standards would require that:
 - Event organizers ensure that all applicable noise bylaws are adhered to.
 - Vendors adhere to the applicable bylaws to ensure pedestrian and cyclist safety.
 - Event organizers provide a waste management plan and have a comprehensive plan to address any major litter conditions during the events operating hours.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Proposed Route Map for Open Streets Toronto
Attachment 2: Toronto Police Services Response to City Staff Information Report