

DEPUTY MAYOR'S ROUNDTABLE ON GRIDLOCK & TRAFFIC CONGESTION



Roundtable Summary

A summary of the February 28, 2014
Roundtable on Gridlock & Traffic Congestion
with recommendations



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR

NORM KELLY

Chair, Executive Committee

One of the biggest challenges facing Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area is gridlock. In order for Toronto to remain competitive and prosperous, it is essential that elected officials and governments partner with stakeholders to develop solutions that will keep people and goods moving efficiently across our city.

At the roundtable, we took an important step towards the formation of a stronger partnership with those who are most affected by gridlock issues. The meeting provided a forum where a variety of stakeholders took time out of their busy schedules to inform decision makers on how this critical issue affects them.

Participants provided insight on behalf of many of the sectors that drive our economy: transportation, hospitality, entertainment, realty and development, shipping, retail, consulting and manufacturing. They spoke and we listened.

This report summarizes findings from the meeting and outlines important next steps. I ask for your endorsement of the following recommendations so that Council can continue supporting those that drive our economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Norm Kelly', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCILLOR

Denzil Minnan-Wong

Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

The Gridlock Roundtable is designed to table the ideas and solutions from individuals who know the issues best. The insights gained through the public discussion enable the City to expand the effectiveness of its services and address problems and infrastructure issues from the ground up.

With an annual estimated cost of \$3.3 billion to commuters and \$2.7 billion to the economy, The City of Toronto is experiencing the highest levels of traffic congestion it has ever seen. If left unabated, the cost of traffic congestion is estimated to balloon to over \$7.8 and \$7.2 billion for commuters and the economy respectively. The economic potential being withheld by issues directly related to gridlock is immense. Every area of possible improvement must be exacerbated if Toronto is to remain competitive in the future.

The Gridlock Roundtable represents a renewed spirit of cooperation between the City and key stakeholders from varying backgrounds who hold a common interest in alleviating gridlock.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denzil Minnan-Wong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong
Chair, Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
Ward 34 – Don Valley East



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCILLOR

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Chair, Economic Development and Culture Committee

Like most large, growing cities, Toronto is facing increased congestion on its roadways. Gridlock, rare here just two decades ago, is now a major inconvenience to residents, a growing constraint on our economy and a significant burden on public safety and our quality of life.

The Gridlock and Traffic Congestion Roundtable has brought together stakeholders and experts to take a fresh look at the problem. The Roundtable's goal is to begin the process of identifying both innovative and tried-and-proven solutions to one of our most pressing regional problems. With the engagement of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, and the collaboration of parties on all sides of the issue, we hope to spark decisive action on this difficult and corrosive problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey background.

Councillor Michael Thompson
Chair, Economic Development &
Culture Committee
Ward 37 – Scarborough Centre

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OVERVIEW

The City of Toronto is the economic centre of Canada. Its strong and diverse economy makes it an ideal place to do business. However, like many prospering urban centers, Toronto has its challenges. Toronto's growth rate is slowly outpacing the capacity and ability of its transportation infrastructure to move goods and people efficiently. Gridlock is an issue Toronto and the surrounding region must face. The average one-way commute is now over 32 minutes and a quarter of Torontonians spend in excess of an hour and a half each day getting to and from workⁱ. Residents living in the Toronto area are plagued by some of the longest commutes in North America – costing Torontonians billions of dollars a year in lost productivityⁱⁱ.

The City of Toronto prioritizes moving people, goods and vehicles effectively. Over two dozen stakeholders from various industries across the Toronto area participated in the *Deputy Mayor's Roundtable on Gridlock & Traffic Congestion*, to determine how Toronto can improve its transportation network. The City of Toronto has been working towards this goal through its development of the City's *Downtown Transportation Operations Study*, the *Congestion Management Plan* and long term strategies in Toronto's *Official Plan* – among countless other initiatives. These initiatives will help determine the best way to address the growing issue of gridlock in Toronto and the region by undertaking an open and ongoing dialogue with residents, businesses and stakeholders. The objective of the Roundtable is to build upon this important foundation and to continue to engage stakeholders in the development of solutions through the policy-making process.



FIGURE 1

Maintaining a High Quality of Life and Economic Performance

Compared to many competing regions, the Toronto region has proven to be a superior place to do business. Toronto joins world class cities like London, New York and Paris as a place that offers a high quality of life for residents and an economically viable climate for its businesses. With an estimated value of \$5.52 trillion, the Toronto area market¹ is the wealthiest in North Americaⁱⁱⁱ. The City of Toronto's 85,000 businesses can reach a market of over 150 million people within a 1-day drive and through the City's transit network, which moves more than half a billion passengers annually^{iv}.

Emerging from the recent global recession, Toronto's economy has performed better than most in North America. Though, it still faces major challenges. The foremost being gridlock, negatively affecting both the quality of life of Torontonians and the City's level of competitiveness^v.

¹ This is a measure of the total income of the population within a 500-mile radius of the metro area (measured in trillions of U.S. dollars).

HIGH COST OF GRIDLOCK AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION

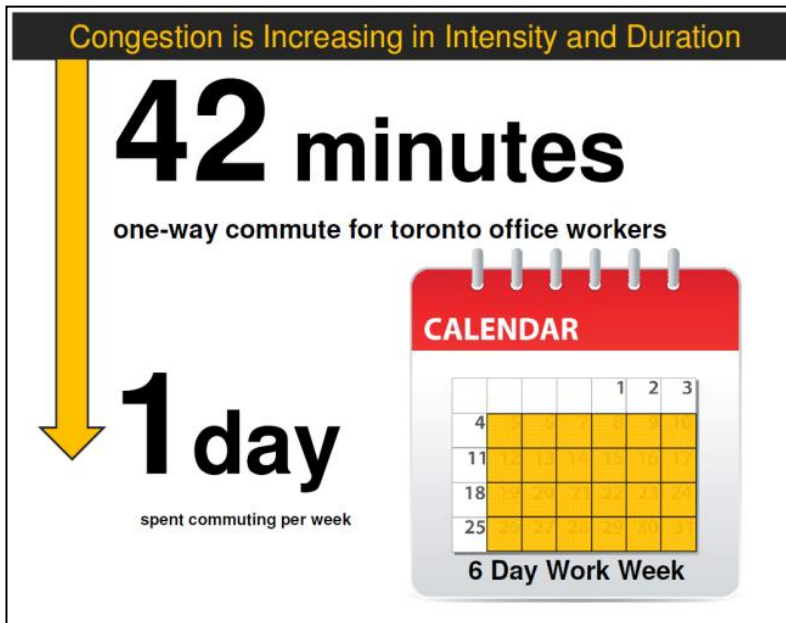


FIGURE 2

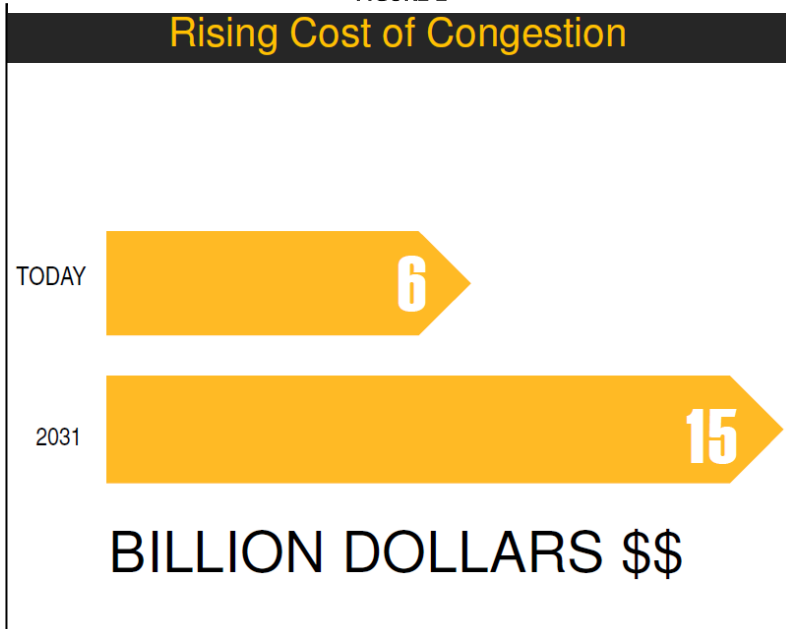


FIGURE 3

Gridlock – A Growing Problem

Currently, the GTA and surrounding regions are experiencing an intensification of development, particularly in Toronto's downtown core. The surge of development has sparked an increase in people living, visiting, working and commuting within Toronto. Consequently, this has led to an urgent need for new transportation and transit options to efficiently accommodate greater numbers of people.

As travel times become longer and trips become more prone to fluctuations in duration, residents and businesses must account for more contingency planning. This, combined with increased commute times, result in a tremendous loss of productivity.

The core cost of gridlock is found by multiplying the amount of time each person wastes in congestion by the value of their time. Collectively, the cost of congestion to the regional economy is valued at over \$6 billion per year^{vi}. Furthermore, the full cost of congestion consists of more than just time spent sitting in traffic. There are a multitude of logistical, economical, social and health-related effects which arise when people and goods cannot move efficiently.

For instance, the increase in gridlock creates a human resources challenge for employers who must match the right people with the right jobs. Commuting times increasingly play a role in determining which jobs prospective employees take^{vii}. In essence, the right employee may not take the right job because the commute is too cumbersome, in turn adversely affecting the employee, employer and the economy as a whole. Other costs of gridlock include its impact on the environment, limits it places on cultural and entertainment opportunities and the social impact on families^{viii}.

WORKING WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The *Deputy Mayor's Roundtable on Gridlock & Traffic Congestion* provided an opportunity to sit down with many of Toronto's business and community leaders. In doing so the Roundtable provided insight into how gridlock affects their operations on a day-to-day basis and how the economy is affected on a macro scale. These partners understand the impacts of this issue best. Their summarized comments must be considered when formulating policy options and when making decisions on recommendations to reduce gridlock.

Comments:

1. Longer travel times and a greater need for contingency plans:
 - Gridlock = missing timelines = losing customers = losing money/less competitive
 - Greater need for contingency planning = missed opportunities
2. Congestion equals higher operating costs:
 - Higher costs = higher input for the same output = less productivity
 - Gridlock = more in wages + inventory costs + fuel costs + wear and tear on vehicles
3. Limits access to jobs:
 - Easing congestion = maintaining access to jobs
 - Longer commutes = less job opportunities for workers + smaller talent pool for employers
 - The result is that businesses can't always find the best person for the job = less productivity
4. Need for more idling spots/ lay-bys
 - Lack of idling spots, lay-bys and taxi stands
 - Taxis and shipping and logistics companies are forced to circle the block or park in the shoulder lane = more congestion
 - Takes them longer to do their job
 - Domino effect as they are forced to add to the congestion
5. Operating hours often coincide with the peak hours of congestion
 - Some businesses operate during the day and cannot shift their operations to off-peak hours. They must meet company/distributor demands.



MOVING FORWARD

Participants were clear that congestion is a regional issue and should not be an issue that Toronto deals with alone. Therefore, the City must bring all three levels of government to the table and develop solutions that are founded on innovation and collaboration. Participants generally supported any planned improvements to transportation and public transit infrastructure that would see traffic moving faster – such as the Downtown Relief Line. They are encouraged by transportation management strategic plans such as the [*City of Toronto's Congestion Management Plan*](#) (CMP), which was unanimously endorsed by Council as a means of lessening the impact of traffic congestion^{ix}.

Ultimately, effective congestion reduction strategies and implementation will yield plenty of positive impacts – both direct and indirect. Businesses can get their products to market faster and consumers can access the goods they need sooner. Shorter commute times broaden the talent pool for employers and proliferate opportunities available to job seekers. Ultimately gridlock alleviation will mean businesses and residents waste less time travelling to their destination and more time doing what matters. Cumulatively, these benefits will produce a healthier, happier and more prosperous Toronto.

CONCLUSION

Toronto needs to be able to move goods and people efficiently in order to maintain the high quality of life that it offers to residents and the economic viability that it provides to businesses. Simply put, the City cannot succeed if it cannot move. This was articulated by roundtable participants who labeled congestion and gridlock and the greatest challenge facing governments.

The leadership and the experience showcased by the participants at the Roundtable on *Gridlock and Traffic Congestion* demonstrated the widespread desire to reduce congestion across Toronto's transportation network. The City must continue to partner with these stakeholders and seek their input throughout the policymaking process. This report helps solidify not only this partnership, but also a strong commitment from the City to provide resources and support to ensure that Toronto's businesses and commuters are as productive as possible. If adopted, the nine recommendations listed below represent a set of integrated strategies designed to enhance the City's ability to mitigate congestion-causing incidences before they arise and more adequately address the overarching and ongoing issue of congestion in its totality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below have been prepared as a result of the *Deputy Mayor's Roundtable on Gridlock and Traffic Congestion* and have been drafted in conjunction with City staff that were present at the roundtable meeting.

Curbside Management Plan Update

1. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to collaborate with the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture and report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter in 2015 on the planning/implementation status of curbside management initiatives outlined in the City of Toronto Congestion Management Plan. Elements considered in the update report should include, but not be limited to, provisions for options to expedite measures that minimize the disruption of vehicular flow, while improving the ability for businesses and service providers to operate on Toronto's streets such as:
 - a. Designated pick-up/drop-off areas for goods and service vehicles;
 - b. Loading zones for people with disabilities;
 - c. Courier delivery zones;
 - d. Temporary film trailer parking; and
 - e. Motor coach parking zones.

Evaluate new Adaptive Response Signal Software Systems

Adaptive Traffic Signal Controls are software systems that modify traffic signal patterns based on real time traffic conditions. While the City has roughly 300 intersections operating with its current adaptive system, the system is nearly 20 years old.

2. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter in 2015 on a strategy and financial implications to modernize and expand the existing traffic adaptive signal control system (SCOOT), included in the strategy a review of new technologies and methodologies are to be considered.

Construction Coordination

Construction and the need for contractors to occupy lanes with equipment and supplies can have significant traffic impacts.

3. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter in 2015 on the planning and/or implementation status of Construction Coordination initiatives outlined in the City of Toronto Congestion Management Plan. Elements considered in the update report should include, but not be limited to, provisions for options to expedite measures that improve

the coordination and management of construction work zones and minimize the impact of work zones on traffic on Toronto's streets such as:

- a. Electronic Lane Occupancy Permit Management system that streamlines the application, approval, receipt and management/tracking of lane occupancy permits;
- b. Lane Occupancy Permit Review that reviews the cost of lane occupancy permits, fines and related contract conditions to ensure they reflect potential impacts on traffic, with the goal to speed up the work and shorten the disruptions to traffic flows; and
- c. Work Zone Performance Management and Monitoring changes to contract requirements that require contractors to comply with the conditions of lane occupancy permits. Also, consider monitoring the traffic performance within the work zone and requiring the contractor to maintain specific levels of service throughout the day as a future enhancement.

Leverage Technology to Relay Information

The following new technologies and practices improve urban travel conditions for the movement of people, goods and services.

Increased Traveller Information

Providing real time traffic information to motorists will help inform decision-making on routing and trip start times. Information can be provided through a variety of sources, including on-route variable message signs, electronic subscription services and through social media.

4. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to provide an implementation status report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter in 2015 on the implementation of strategies designed to provide motorists with real-time information about incidents, volume and delays for the City's expressways and arterial roads. The update report should include, but not be limited to, provisions for options to expedite the procurement and installation of data-collecting cameras and associated devices on arterial roadways as a means of strengthening data sources and networks to ensure that information on current traffic conditions is accurate, reliable and readily available.

Incident and Event Response

5. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to work with relevant stakeholders such as the Toronto Police Service, Fire Services Division and Office of Emergency Management to undertake a review of the City's current practices in incident management related to the RESCU system and to report findings to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter in 2015, in an effort to reduce the number of incidents, reduce the recovery time from incidents, provide more and faster information to motorists about incidents and implement recommendations.

Many expressway collisions result from congestion caused by a minor accident or a disabled vehicle, which remains in the travel lane.

6. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to consult with stakeholder groups to further enhance the development and promotion of public education and marketing campaigns such as "Steer It, Clear It", which encourages motorists involved in a property damage-only collision on expressways to move their vehicles to a safe place, if possible.
7. City Council request the General Manager of Transportation Services to explore the feasibility of implementing roving service patrol vehicles along the DVP and Gardiner Expressway corridors to help motorists with minor mechanical breakdowns and to clear vehicles from travel lanes and to report findings to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee by the end of the second quarter of 2015.

Develop a Broad Strategy for Goods Movement

Metrolinx is currently developing a regional goods movement strategy, to prioritize the movement of goods moving forward. In addition, the City's Official Plan prioritizes the use of City roads for goods movement, recognizing the importance of doing so to support economic development.

8. City Council request City staff to continue to work with other orders of government, other municipalities and representatives from across the goods movement industry and the public to support this comprehensive multi-modal approach for the safe and efficient movement of goods within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Encourage Greater Use of Public Transit

9. City Council request the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to work with representatives of major events and festivals to explore ways to encourage greater use of public transit and report findings back to the Economic Development and Culture Committee in the second quarter in 2015.

ENDNOTES

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- ^{viii} Dachis, Benjamin, pg. 2.
- ^{ix} City of Toronto. "Congestion Management Plan 2014-2018." City of Toronto, October 2013. Online PDF. <<http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Transportation%20Services/TMC/Files/PDF/Congestion%20Management/Congestion%20Management.pdf>>.

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