

LORNE ROSS

May 2nd 2014.

Chairman and Members
Scarborough Community Council

RE: McCOWAN PRECINCT STUDY

Dear Sirs and Madame:

I am writing to Scarborough Community Council on behalf of the three Community Associations and several condo boards with respect to the McCowan Precinct Study.

The Study is an opportunity for Council to make decisions which will improve our Centre. We have made a number of suggestions to improve our Centre as part of this Study.

We have not been able to read the Staff report to your meeting of May 13th. It won't be available until a few days before your meeting. That would not be sufficient time for our group to read, understand and develop a response to the Staff report.

What follows is our proposal for a number of actions that would clearly benefit our Centre, items we have been advocating for a number of years while we await the conclusion of this study.

1. Traffic-Transportation

The City commissioned ARUP Canada Inc to examine existing traffic operations, forecast demand for complete build out in the Precinct and recommend improvements needed to accommodate that demand

In measuring traffic operations the experts look especially at how the intersections work. It is not often that a through section of road has problems: congestion and conflict with pedestrians occurs at the intersections. The experts use two measuring techniques when looking at intersections that most ordinary people have a chance to understand:

Volume to Capacity or "V/C"

1. What volume of traffic is trying to get through an intersection?
2. What is the theoretical capacity of that intersection to handle that volume?
3. What is the ratio of Volume vs. Capacity?
4. Any ratio in excess of 1.00 means the demand to get through the intersection is exceeding its theoretical capacity.

Level of Service:

What is the "Level of Service" of the intersection, rated from "A" which is just great, all the way down to Levels "E" and "F"?

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- Level E is described as ‘very heavy delays’ typically taking between 55 seconds and 80 seconds for a driver to make their way through the intersection;
- Level F is as bad as it gets. It’s described as ‘... ever-increasing delays as queuing begins to form...considered unacceptable to most drivers. Delays getting through the intersection exceed 80 seconds.’

The ARUP traffic Study looked at existing conditions and, by adding in all the development that is expected in McCowan Precinct, they forecast future operating conditions.

So how does our Centre perform?

McCowan Road between Ellesmere and 401 is the primary arterial road allowing people to get to and through our Centre. If it is badly congested and traffic backs up in all directions, drivers are going to seek alternate ‘short cuts’ through the community’s local road network.

Here’s how three of the key intersection on McCowan Road perform today [in Blue] and as forecasted in the future [in Red]:

Existing Conditions

Future Conditions

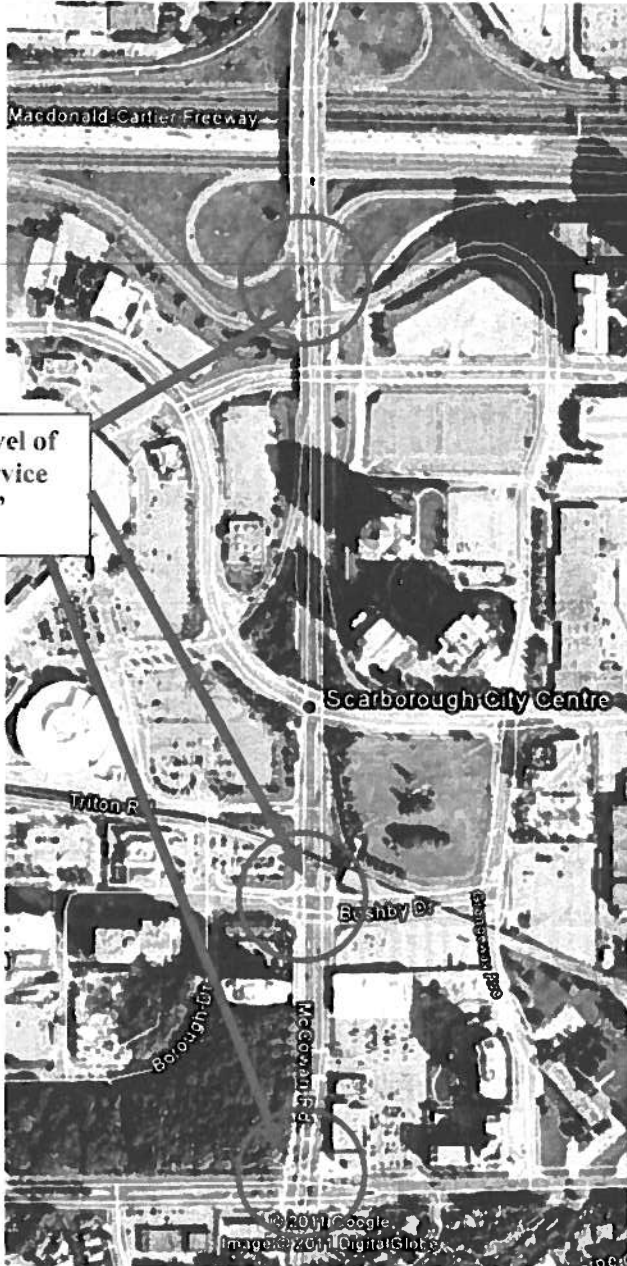
	Morning Peak Hour		Afternoon Peak Hour		Morning Peak Hour		Afternoon Peak Hour	
	Volume to Capacity	Level of Service	Volume to Capacity	Level of Service	Volume to Capacity	Level of Service	Volume to Capacity	Level of Service
McCowan and Ellesmere	1.30	F	2.32	F	1.09	E	1.93	F
McCowan and 401 Traffic Signals	1.04	D	0.88	C	1.75	F	1.53	F
McCowan and Bushby- Town Centre Court	0.66	B	0.80	C	1.01	D	1.60	F

Source: Tables 13 and 21. ARUP Canada report, May 2013.

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It's hard to understand that McCowan-Ellesmere will somehow improve from a Volume/Capacity ratio of 2.32 in today's afternoon peak hour to only 1.93 in the future when all the expected development takes place. Or that the morning rush hour at this intersection will somehow drop from today's 1.30 to 1.09 Volume/Capacity.



Setting that aside, no matter how you cut it, it looks like our main road to and through the Centre will be at the lowest possible level of service available on the engineer's scale... "considered unacceptable by most drivers".

The consultant's report does not put forward anything which would add significantly to the capacity of the road system to handle the expected volume of traffic.

Instead the consultant recommends:

- That the width of traffic lanes on roads in our Centre be repainted so they are narrower, going down from 3.65 meters to 3.3m.
- That the curbing at major intersections be dug up and re-poured so the curves are tighter, more like right angles. Not to worry about heavy trucks and buses rear wheels climbing up

over the curb as they make right hand turns: they can just pull out and use more than one lane before they start to make right hand turns.

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- Medians that sometimes act as pedestrian refuges should be removed.
- Right turn lanes at several intersections such as Progress and Consilium/Grangeway, created to get right turning vehicles out of the through lanes at intersections, should be dug up and removed.

After the City has paid to do all these works, it will be a little bit easier for pedestrians to cross our Centre's roads because the paved surface will be slightly narrower.

The consultants also looked at how pedestrian use our Centre. They counted pedestrians crossing today at 11 intersections. By far and away the busiest intersection for pedestrian crossing is McCowan-Bushby-Town Centre Court. 950 people crossed the street at this intersection in the combined morning plus afternoon peak hours. The next busiest intersection for pedestrians was Progress-Consilium which counted only 395 crossings in the same period. Future pedestrian volumes are not forecast however, given the amount of new development expected in the Precinct, ARUP expects pedestrian volumes at McCowan-Bushby-Town Centre Court will increase.

These are precisely the conditions which lead to our proposal to Span McCowan.

We have a very large and increasing number of autos, trucks and buses congested and frustrated trying to get through this intersection northbound-southbound, competing with a large and increasing volume of pedestrians, cyclists trying to get across east-west. There is only so much 'green time' on the traffic signals available to be given to either of these movements. Whatever 'green time' you give to pedestrians, you take away from vehicles and vice versa.

As we have pointed out before, this part of McCowan is down in a ditch. It is much lower than the surrounding properties. Pedestrians have to walk down to this Level of Service F intersection full of frustrated cars, truck and buses, wait their turn to cross and then trudge back up on the other side.

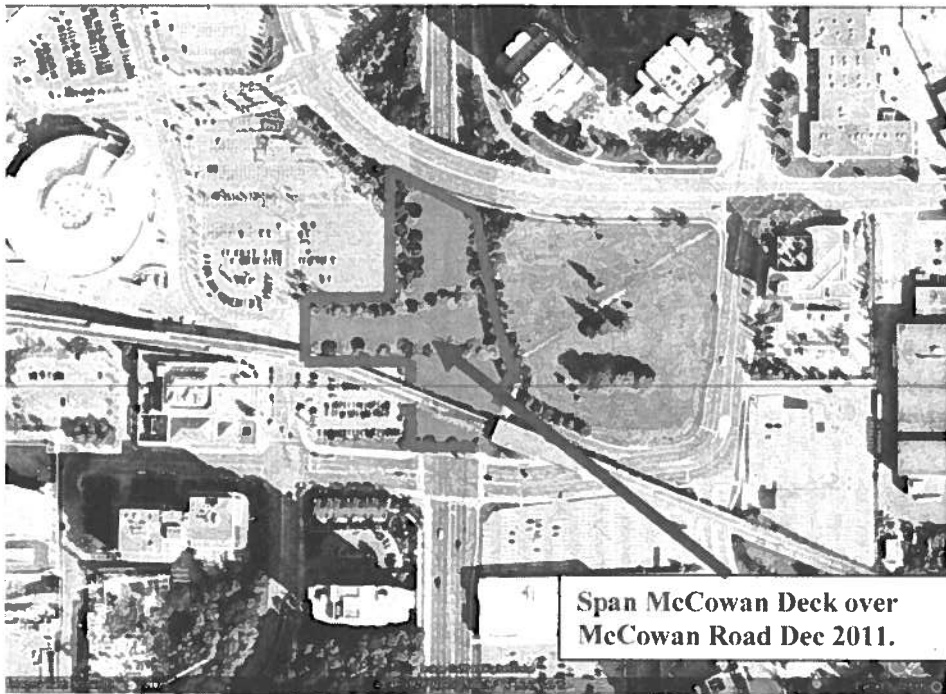
Why?

How is that safe for people with movement disabilities, people with limited sight, people in wheelchairs or using walkers, people carrying children to/from day care?

Why would you force pedestrians to make that movement when there is a perfectly delightful and 100% safe alternative available with a little vision and courage?

Span McCowan's proposal to build a pedestrian deck over the McCowan ditch at Bushby would create a safe and attractive way for pedestrians and cyclists in ever increasing numbers to get across this Level F intersection. They would no longer 'compete' with north-south traffic for green time. The intersection would be allowed to work at its best possible level of service for cars trucks and buses. What's wrong with that?

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Community Council directed Staff two years ago to study our Span McCowan proposal and report back on the feasibility and costs involved. To the best of our knowledge no preliminary engineering work has been done, no design alternatives have been developed. As far as we can tell the Google Earth-Adobe Photoshop image we prepared to illustrate the concept was sent to Works who came back with a cost estimate of \$20 million to build the deck and, \$293K a year to maintain it.

Toronto sold the city lands on the east side of McCowan in 2012 for \$22.6 million. If these funds were used to improve our Centre, as required by your Official Plan, you could build the deck **and** have enough left over to build a market for Scarborough.

A very large part of this \$20 million estimate from Works staff is because any deck over a road which exceeds 90m in length it is classified as a tunnel and one must construct and operate expensive ventilation systems.

We replied a year ago that the deck does not have to be 90m in its north-south dimension to achieve its purpose. Anyone truly interested in making this concept work could easily rework our concept to no longer need expensive ventilation costs. We have heard nothing from staff on this topic in over a year. No engineer has been hired to do preliminary design work to test feasibility. No cost estimates have been provided to us except for the 'tunnel'.

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We believe its time for Council to provide more explicit direction so that you receive accurate and reliable information in order to decide if a pedestrian deck over McCowan proceeds.

Recommendation:

That the Chief Planner retain qualified engineering consultant services to prepare preliminary designs together with feasibility studies and preliminary cost estimates to build a pedestrian deck across McCowan Road in the area between the RT overpass structure and the Progress Bridge to provide a safe, direct and attractive grade-separated crossing of this major arterial road for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with movement challenges uniting the two neighbourhoods on either side of McCowan Road. Deck designs shall advance beyond purely utilitarian and be of sufficient width to create attractive public space including landscaping and public art but not classified as a 'tunnel'.

2. Greening the Span McCowan Deck

Our goal is not only to allow safe pedestrian crossings but to also add to the open space system of our Centre with a broad well landscaped space on the deck. Just like Chicago. Public art. Benches. Trees. Grass. A quality public open space.



Apparently our Centre is seriously deficient in public open space and many more residents are expected if we are to become a successful 'downtown'.

Creating attractive new public open space on the Span McCowan deck is efficient because:

- You already own the land = zero land acquisition costs
- You don't have to tear down and existing industrial buildings to create the site = zero land acquisition costs
- You don't have to pay to decommission a former industrial property = zero cost
- You don't lose any existing and future property taxes
- You don't throw away any existing or future jobs

If you don't do it on the deck you will have to do it elsewhere in our Centre.

Parks staff have advised it costs +/- \$935.00 per m2 to landscape a deck, half hard surface, half soft. Total cost to landscape the Span McCowan deck would be between \$6.3 million

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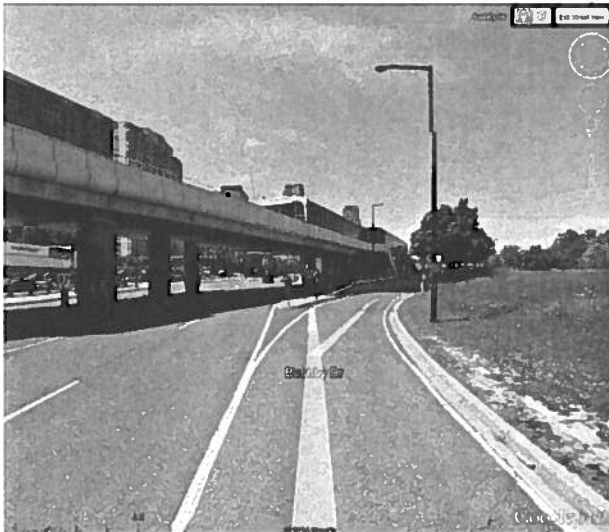
and \$5.5 million depending on the size of the deck. What you don't have is a cost comparison to meeting parkland needs by acquiring another site in our Centre.

Recommendation:

That the costs to create attractive public open space on a deck over McCowan Road be compared to cost to create an equal sized public open space elsewhere in the Scarborough Centre including costs to acquire land, demolish buildings, decontaminate lands and landscape the property as well as forgone employment and municipal tax revenue.

3. Bushby-McCowan Right Turn Lane

To make matters worse at the McCowan-Bushby-Town centre Court intersection ARUP proposes that the westbound Bushby right turn lane to McCowan northbound be removed.

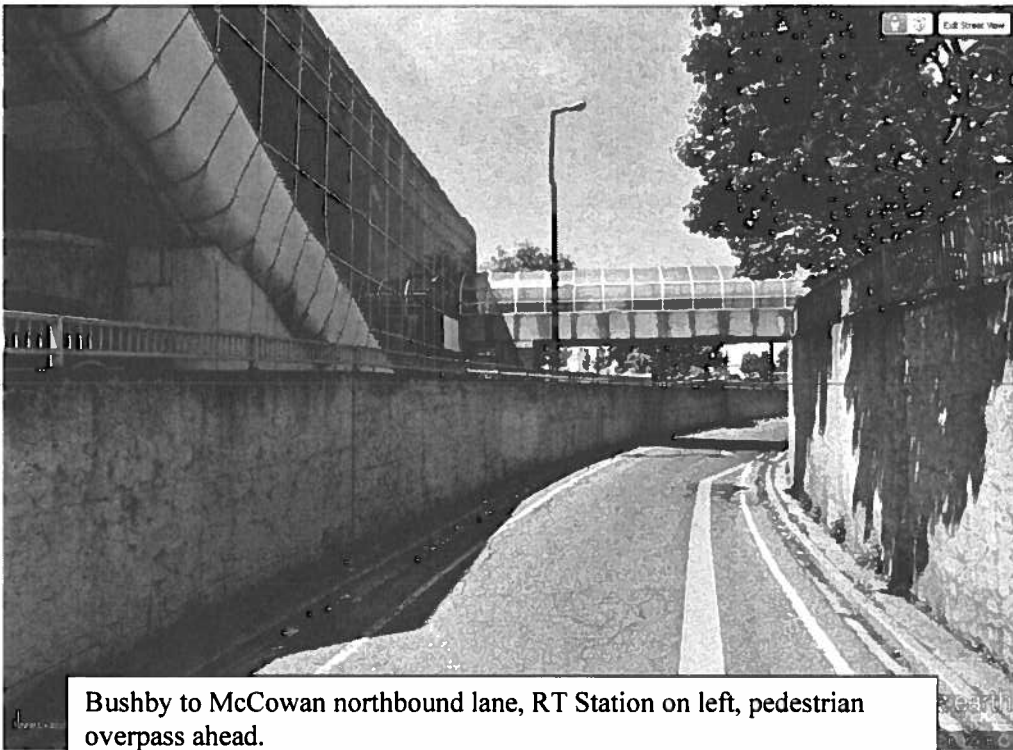


Westbound on Bushby, approaching lane to McCowan north bound.

This lane allows vehicles to avoid all pedestrian movements at the McCowan-Bushby intersection. It dives down under a pedestrian bridge and comes up again on McCowan northbound as a free flowing on ramp.

If it is taken out as proposed, all right turns would be forced through the intersection which is already operating at Level of Service F. Every right turning vehicle would conflict with the highest pedestrian cross movements in our Centre.

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Bushby to McCowan northbound lane, RT Station on left, pedestrian overpass ahead.

There is very little traffic on Bushby at this time. The right turn lane is infrequently used. It was built 'ahead of its time' because the Official Plan calls for Bushby to be extended not only to Bellamy but all the way to Markham Road. In approving the addition of seniors' apartments to the Global Kingdom church at Markham-Tuxedo Court last October, Council secured the right of way for the eastern terminus of Bushby. Redevelopment of the Simpsons stamping plant property will begin the Bushby Drive extension toward Bellamy.

Why would you spend scarce public monies to tear out this free flow lane and demolish a pedestrian overpass to force greater pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at a Level F intersection?

Council cannot and should not plan the route for the Bushby extension to Markham Road in bits and pieces. That's the type of one hundred year old piecemeal planning that created broken, disjointed roads which fail to serve their purpose.

Recommendations:

1. Council must authorize a proper and comprehensive design and EA process to determine exactly Bushby is to be extended. Our Centre will need this east west road capacity for cars, buses and trucking as well as pedestrians and cyclists.

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2. Council should NOT APPROVE any proposal to remove the existing westbound Bushby to northbound McCowan free flow until an EA for Bushby to Markham Road has been dealt with.

4. A Market for Scarborough



As part of our Span McCowan presentation to Community Council in June 2012 we brought forward the concept of building a permanent all weather/all seasons food market in our Centre comparable to the St. Lawrence Market in downtown.

Two years ago Community Council unanimously approved the following direction to Staff:

Direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, in consultation with Transportation Services and Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff to review the "Span McCowan" proposal presented by the Glen Andrew Community Association as part of the on-going McCowan Precinct Plan Study and that its feasibility including cost estimates be reported out in association with the McCowan Precinct Plan Study's Final Report.

We are concerned that insufficient effort has been made to 'review' the Scarborough Market component of Span McCowan.

- There has been no marketing consultant retained to examine market feasibility.
- You have no expert analysis or opinion on whether a market for Scarborough would be a roaring success or a total failure. There are people who do this work. You haven't hired them.
- Facilities and Real Estate who are responsible for St. Lawrence Market has basically said "St Lawrence is a 'one of' historical anomaly. We don't do markets."

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- Although hundreds of City facilities especially in the old City of Toronto are directed by community boards appointed by Council, your Scarborough Staff apparently have no experience with how this works.

It's been two years since you gave direction to staff to study the concept of a Market for Scarborough. If you are to have reliable information in making a decision it looks like you will have to be more explicit in your directions to staff:

Recommendation:

That the Chief Planner retain qualified market consultants to conduct a feasibility study of 4,400 m2 of food retailing and related services, located in the Scarborough Centre and modeled on the main floor of the South St. Lawrence Market building at Front and Jarvis. The Study shall assume the market building is:

1. **built with public funding secured through Section 37;**
2. **located on public land within the Scarborough Centre;**
3. **managed by a Community Board appointed by Council;**
4. **tenanted by independent [non-chain] merchants reflective of/responding to Scarborough's ethnic diversity.**

5. A Site for Scarborough's Market

The very best site on which to locate a public Market for Scarborough, with excellent visibility, excellent transit access and available public parking was sold by the City to the Goldman Group in December 2011.

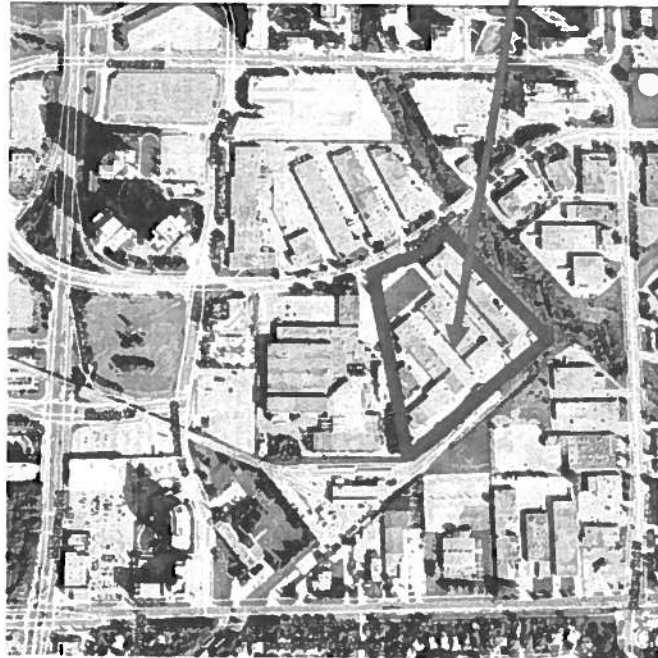
As an alternative Council could get its feet wet and test the market for very little initial expense by allowing food retailing and restaurants in the City property at 705 Progress.

This site was acquired perhaps 30 years ago by the Board of Education and the City in case a park-school site was needed in our Centre. It is occupied by four single storey multiple unit buildings leased by Facilities and Real Estate.

In my observation there is a persistently high level of vacant units in the complex.

If vacancies were managed to 'free up' the easterly 2 buildings which have units facing each other across a parking area;

If the parking area were removed and replaced with seating,



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landscaping, public art and roofed over to become a weather protected attractive public space;

If these units were leased to independent Scarborough based food retailers and restaurateurs,

If you appointed a Community Board to set policy and hire a manager:

THEN we would have the beginnings of a Market for Scarborough.

The McCowan Precinct planning study gives Council to opportunity to start this off by changing the zoning By-law to permit retail stores, restaurants, day care and community services.

There's no harm done if you change the By-law now and eventually, when you receive a marketing study and preliminary designs, you decide not to proceed. You still own the property. You are the landlord.



Recommendation:

That the Chief Planner be authorized and instructed to initiate a rezoning application for 705

Progress Avenue to permit retail stores, restaurants and such other uses as may be required to allow development of a "Market for Scarborough" on this publically owned property modeled on the South St Lawrence Market at Front and Jarvis.

Yours truly,

Lorne Ross

On behalf of:

Glen Andrew Community Association.

Midland Park Community Association

Condo Boards:

MTCC1143, 68 Corporate Drive.

MTCC 1133, Omni Drive