



**To: Mayor and Members of City Council**

**From: Walk Toronto**

**Subject: Gardiner East**

**Date: June 9, 2015**

Walk Toronto is a grassroots walking advocacy group dedicated to making Toronto a better city for walking.

**Walk Toronto supports the Remove (Boulevard) option for the redevelopment of the Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard east of Jarvis Street. The Boulevard option would free up land for redevelopment, improve the noise environment, offer better urban design options and cost less money.**

Apart from providing straightforward and typical intersections for pedestrians to cross at, the Boulevard has the potential to provide a complete and comfortable streetscape that pedestrians will use and enjoy. Though Walk Toronto has concerns about pedestrian safety in the design of the proposed boulevard, we feel that these issues can be addressed in the detailed design phase of the project. Any boulevard proposal must consider safe and inviting pedestrian crossings at all intersections.

The so-called Hybrid option preserves, for the most part, the status quo, and the term “hybrid,” in our view, is misleading. The pedestrian experience isn’t much improved from the status quo, fewer land parcels between Yonge and Cherry streets are available for development, and the long-term costs (capital, operations and maintenance) are higher. We note that both the Boulevard and the Hybrid/Maintain options assume that the Downtown Relief Line (DRL) and enhanced GO service on the Stouffville and Lakeshore lines (either as GO RER or SmartTrack) will be in place within the planning horizon to 2031. The capacity that these two transit services will dwarf the capacity of the Gardiner/Lake Shore (FGE/LSB) combination under any remove/modify/maintain scenario.

We also note that the Environmental Assessment study overlooks the fact that the Province intends to enhance GO service on the Richmond Hill line, a commuter service that more closely parallels the Don Valley Parkway (DVP). It is the DVP that feeds most of the traffic into the east FGE/LSB combination. It is clear that proposed transit services have the potential to accommodate the number of commuters coming into the downtown from the northeast under any plausible growth scenario within the planning horizon.

Walk Toronto is confident that if funds saved by building the Boulevard Option are invested in transit expansion, overall travel time reductions for Torontonians will be far more substantial than any time savings achieved by the hybrid option for Gardiner drivers, whose numbers are minute compared to transit riders across the city. From a broader perspective - - which values the time of pedestrians and transit riders on par with that of motorists - - **the hybrid option is likely to worsen overall congestion in the city.**

Realistically, there will always be downtown commuters who favour the use of a private automobile and there will be a need for roadways that can accommodate trucking requirements. We do know that those involved in the movement of goods, along with City staff and citizens, have the creative ability to develop effective business models within this desired Boulevard option.

While there were no data presented during the Environmental Assessment study to quantify the need (not the desire) for private automobile use into the downtown, we do know that people do it and so there must be a desire. But, is there a need? And is that need/desire related to the availability of public transportation?

We also know that the number of people who drive downtown has been almost stagnant, especially on the east FGE/LSB combination, even though the number of jobs in the core has risen dramatically over the last forty years. This suggests a trend to a transportation modal shift to transit/cycling/walking. With an increase in the capacity of public transit and commuter lines, this trend could be increased further, maybe much further, and as a pedestrian advocacy group we can envision the possibility of an eight-lane boulevard evolving into a four-lane boulevard in the future. This would better accommodate the expected growth in the number of pedestrians in the area presently occupied by the Gardiner East, a growth that will occur due to the ongoing development of the Port Lands and East Bayfront.

We acknowledge that even an eight-lane boulevard, similar to University Avenue, would not be ideal from a pedestrian's point of view, but at Walk Toronto, we are always willing and able to work with the City, planning consultants and other stakeholders to come to a satisfactory result that will maximise the safety and comfort of all road users.

The merits of tearing down the Gardiner East Expressway are clear, and we urge you to choose the Boulevard option.