



January 5, 2015

To: Councillor Jaye Robinson, Chair
Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

Re: **Managing Traffic Disruption on City-Led Construction Projects (Item PW1.3)**

I am writing to you on behalf of The Eglinton Way BIA in support of the City's efforts to better manage construction-causing traffic disruption issues. We applaud efforts by staff and several Councillors and the Mayor to limit unnecessary lane closures and other disruptions to City streets. We recommend that the City also consider extending these initiatives to other organizations such as utility companies and contractors to Metrolinx, where appropriate.

The Eglinton Way BIA represents approximately 200 storefront businesses located on Eglinton Avenue between Chaplin Crescent and Oriole Parkway. As a result of the construction of the Crosstown and the first redevelopment project of many more to come, our BIA members have become acutely aware of any and all intrusions into the right-of-way as the cumulative impact of each added activity receives more attention that it would have before.

It is for this reason that we support initiatives by the City to become much more vigilant about managing the scope of disruption, especially in areas such as Eglinton Avenue where so much change is underway. We are particularly interested in the Work Zone Performance Management and Monitoring section and urge the City to further refine efforts to include detailed traffic mitigation efforts into its approval process. We also suggest that follow-up inspections be made to determine the efficacy of the approved work zone plan to ensure that the space demands granted are indeed necessary. We also support incentive-based contracts with penalty clauses to provide focus and accountability to those involved.

We also recommend that Metrolinx' contractors and other organizations that routinely occupy space in the right of way – such as utility companies, be subject to any new plans or policies that are developed.



In this example, one lane was blocked for 4 days straight at the same time as LRT work nearby

As business owners pay more and more attention to every added disruption to the street, questions about the need and efficiency of utility companies that routinely block off areas near their intended job site have intensified. Utility companies often send several trucks to service a job and assume valuable street space when it may be possible that fewer trucks are needed. In areas already stressed by lane closures and construction disruption, it may be necessary to limit practices that might not have the same impact on other city roads.

In our experience with Metrolinx and its contractors, permitted work zone and lane occupancy activities appeared overly flexible and easily abused by contractors and on-site workers (such as assuming control and blocking lanes to park vehicles, including the private automobiles of on-site workers). In a recent Crosstown example on Eglinton Avenue, the BIA argued that blocking a full lane for more than a block for trucks to access a work zone was unnecessarily intrusive and amounted to abuse of the right-of-way (especially when the blocked-off lane was occupied by the personal vehicles of on-site workers). This situation directly impacted local businesses and the quality of life for people that live above the stores on Eglinton. Metrolinx repeatedly defended the contractor and in a meeting called by Councillor Matlow to discuss their inaction on the issue, a Metrolinx representative responded that they were limited to “moral suasion” to curb contractor activities and behaviour. The introduction of incentives and penalty clauses could provide greater accountability and oversight to such situations.



Despite repeated complaints that this lane was not needed to manage construction, the lane remained blocked-off to accommodate on-site workers' vehicles

In closing, we applaud the City for pursuing these initiatives and hope that you will consider tighter approval and enforcement mechanisms in areas where construction disruption is ongoing for extended periods.

Sincerely,
Maureen Sirois, Chair
The Eglinton Way BIA