Two-way Operation - Charles Street West

Date: March 21, 2017
To: Toronto and East York Community Council
From: Acting Director, Transportation Services, Toronto and East York District
Wards: Ward 27, Toronto Centre-Rosedale

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority to make a final decision, provided that it is not amended so that it varies with City policy or by-laws.

This report will provide the results of a review on the feasibility of permitting two-way traffic flow on Charles Street West, between Queens Park Crescent East and Yonge Street. The conversion of Charles Street West is feasible and will enhance the connectivity of the area road network and will promote slower operating speeds. However, this operation will result in the loss of on-street parking, increase traffic volumes, introduce new potential traffic conflicts and will require modifications to the road alignment and traffic control signals at two locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Director, Transportation Services, Toronto and East York District recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize all-way compulsory stop control at the intersection of Balmuto Street and Charles Street West.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.
DECISION HISTORY

On June 14, 2016, Toronto and East York Community Council requested Transportation Services staff review and report to Toronto and East York Community Council on the feasibility of permitting two-way traffic on Charles Street West, between Queens Park Crescent East and Yonge Street, to improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The Council decision can be found at: http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.TE17.113

COMMENTS

Charles Street West, between Queens Park Crescent East and Yonge Street, is a collector roadway with a regulatory speed limit of 50 km/h. There is no TTC service provided on this section of the road. The following review provides the existing conditions and the impacts of a potential two-way operation, summarized for each block of Charles Street West (west to east):

Queens Park Crescent East to St. Thomas Street
This section of Charles Street West operates one-way in the westbound direction and is comprised of a travel lane and a parking lane. It has sidewalks on both sides, a pavement width of about 6.1 metres and a daily traffic volume of about 2,500 vehicles. Westbound traffic is stop controlled at the intersection with the east side of Queens Park Crescent East. Westbound left-turns are prohibited at Queens Park Crescent East from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. The land use in the immediate area includes a theatre, a library, a student centre and residential portions. There is a driveway from the Victoria University student centre on the north side and there are four driveways on the south side. The existing parking regulations are as follows:

North Side:
- Parking is prohibited, 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., Monday to Friday, except public holidays;
- Pay and display parking, 9:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday and 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Sunday; and
- Three-hour time limit parking, all other times (unsigned, statutory).

South Side:
- Stopping is prohibited at all times, between St. Thomas Street and a point 72 metres west; and
- Parking is prohibited at all times, between Queens Park Crescent East and a point 72 metres west of St. Thomas Street.

Introducing two-way traffic on this section of Charles Street West will enhance access to the land uses in this area. Additionally, as the through traffic lanes will be narrower and motorists will need to be aware of opposing traffic, this operation will promote slower operating speeds.
Since this section of Charles Street West has a 6.1 metre pavement width, it will be necessary to prohibit parking at all times on both sides to facilitate two-way traffic flow. This will result in the loss of about 28 parking spaces on the north side of the road. This operation will also introduce new potential conflict points between westbound motorists and traffic at the intersection with Queens Park Crescent East and the mid-block driveways.

The potential two-way operation will increase traffic volumes on this street and may necessitate the installation of traffic control signals or a southbound left-turn restriction at the intersection with Queens Park Crescent East.

**St. Thomas Street to a point 44 metres east**
This section of Charles Street West operates one-way in the westbound direction. It has sidewalks on both sides, a pavement width of about 6.1 metres and a daily traffic volume of about 4,400 vehicles. The land use is Kintore College and residential. There is a single driveway from to/from Kintore College on the south side. The intersection of Charles Street West and St. Thomas Street is all-way stop controlled. The existing parking regulations are as follows:

**North Side:**
- Parking is prohibited at all times.

**South Side:**
- Stopping is prohibited at all times.

Introducing two-way traffic on this section of Charles Street West will enhance access to the land uses in this area and promote slower operating speeds. The potential operation will increase traffic volumes on this street and introduce new potential conflict points between westbound motorists and traffic at the intersection with St. Thomas Street and the mid-block driveway.

**A point 44 metres east of St. Thomas Street to Bay Street**
This section of Charles Street West already operates with two-way traffic. It has sidewalks on both sides, a pavement width of about 6.1 metres and a daily two-way traffic volume of about 3,600 vehicles. The land use is residential. There are two driveways to Nos. 1132 and 1166 Bay Street on the north side and two driveways to No. 57 Charles Street West on the south side. The intersection of Charles Street West and Bay Street is controlled by traffic control signals. The existing parking regulations are as follows:

**North Side:**
- Stopping is prohibited at all times.

**South Side:**
- Stopping is prohibited at all times.

The potential two-way operation of the adjacent sections of Charles Street West will increase traffic volumes on this section.
Bay Street to Balmuto Street
This section of Charles Street West already operates with two-way traffic. It has sidewalks on both sides, a pavement width of about 10.9 metres and a daily two-way traffic volume of about 6,700 vehicles. The land use is residential and commercial. There are four driveways from No. 44 Charles Street West on the north side and a public lane (La Scala Lane) on the south side. There is an exclusive westbound left-turn lane provided at Bay Street. The intersection of Charles Street West and Balmuto Street is all-way stop controlled. The existing parking regulations are as follows:

North Side:
- Standing is prohibited at all times.

South Side:
- Parking is prohibited at all times.

The potential two-way operation of the adjacent sections of Charles Street West will increase traffic volumes on this section.

Balmuto Street to Yonge Street
This section of Charles Street West operates one-way in the westbound direction. It has sidewalks on both sides and a daily traffic volume of about 6,000 vehicles. It generally has a pavement width of about 9.8 metres, although the south side has been narrowed at Balmuto Street to 6.0 metres to reinforce the two-way to one-way westbound transition. The land use is residential and commercial. There is a driveway to No. 30 Charles Street West on the north side, just east of Balmuto Street. The intersection of Charles Street West and Yonge Street is controlled by traffic control signals. The existing parking regulations are as follows:

North Side:
- Parking is prohibited, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday;
- One-hour Time Limit Parking, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., Monday to Saturday; and
- Three-hour time limit parking, all other times (unsigned, statutory).

South Side:
- Parking is prohibited at all times.

Since this section of Charles Street West has a pavement width of 9.8 metres, it could accommodate two-way traffic lanes and maintain the parking lane. Alternatively, the exclusive westbound left-turn lane at St. Nicholas Street and for eastbound left-turn lane at Yonge Street could be maintained if parking was prohibited on both sides of the road.

The potential operation will increase traffic volumes on this street and introduce new potential conflict points between westbound motorists and traffic at the intersection with Balmuto Street and the mid-block driveway.
This potential two-way operation will also require the installation of eastbound signal heads at Yonge Street and physical modifications on the south side of the intersection with Balmuto Street.

**All Sections**
The conversion of Charles Street West is technically feasible and will enhance the connectivity of the area road network as motorists will have to take a less circuitous route to/from their destination. Additionally, this proposal will promote slower operating speeds, due to the narrower lanes for through traffic and the introduction of friction with opposing traffic flows.

However, this operation will also result in the loss of a number of on-street parking spaces. Additionally, it will likely increase traffic volumes and introduce new potential traffic conflicts between westbound motorists and pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Finally, the two-way operation will require modifications to the road alignment at Balmuto Street and modifications to the traffic control signals at Yonge Street.

In view of the forgoing impacts, it is recommended that extensive community consultation be undertaken prior to the potential two-way conversion of Charles Street West, between Queens Park Crescent East and Yonge Street, to ensure that all residents, businesses and institutions are aware of, and generally in support of, this operation.

**House-keeping Issues**
During the course of our review it was noted that there is a discrepancy between the posted signs and the by-lawed regulations. At the intersection of Charles Street West and Balmuto Street, traffic is controlled by posted all-way stop signs. However, only the southbound approach on Balmuto Street has been by-lawed. Recommendation 2 will correct this discrepancy.
Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam has been advised of the recommendations of this staff report.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Drawing No. 421G-2437, dated March 2017

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