



April 8, 2019

RE: Agenda Item EX4.2: The Future of King Street - Results of the Transit Pilot

Dear members of the Executive Committee, City Council, and the Clerk,

I'm pleased to express TTCriders' support for the King Street Pilot and the staff recommendation to make transit priority measures a permanent fixture on King Street between Bathurst and Jarvis. We are also urging City Council to build on the success of the pilot by

- Removing current exemptions
- extending the length of the transit priority area, and
- replicating this approach across the city.

TTCriders is a membership-based group of transit riders that want to see better more affordable TTC service in Toronto. We give a voice to the over 1.7 million daily transit riders.

Make it permanent

As a key transit corridor, moving more people than the Sheppard Subway, and the Scarborough RT, King Street must provide a fast and reliable option for people to travel around our city.

Transit riders who use the King Street corridor have been waiting a long time for better transit - and we are thrilled that the King Street Pilot has exceeded our expectations. King Street users can now rely on the streetcar to get to work on time and to take it home without long wait times. It's made the commute less stressful and means more time for people to live their lives.

Also seeing that people who gave up on the streetcar a long time ago are taking it again, leaving their cars at home.

The latest numbers back up these testimonials: the pilot has made great improvements to streetcar service, with improved reliability and reduced travel times. And not only is it moving people more reliably and faster across the city, it is showing us that when transit service is fast and reliable, more people will take it.

Good transit that builds ridership on the TTC is imperative to ensure that our city is sustainable, and we are meeting the needs of our growing population.

Make it even better

Through the shift from a pilot to a permanent design, we look forward to seeing improvements to the street design by learning from people's experiences throughout the pilot. We included a summary feedback that we have put together based on our own outreach efforts.

Among these suggestions there are three that I want to highlight for you today:

1. Remove exemptions that disrupt transit service after 10pm

City staff noted that late evening travel times are 30% higher than in the early evening periods. During these off-peak times service is still frequent and over 2,400 passengers ride the streetcar daily after 10pm¹. City staff's recommendation to study the late night taxi exemption because of its disruption to service, and hope to see exemptions shortened or eliminated to improve service during those hours and ensure that the busiest surface transit route in the city has full transit priority throughout the day.

2. Extend transit priority further along the 504 route

Provide transit priority on King well beyond the downtown core to the full length of the King 504 to further improve the reliability and travel times and better serve more riders, including neighbourhoods like Liberty Village, Corktown Commons, St. Lawrence, and Parkdale.

While the pilot has improved commutes for people well beyond the current boundaries, we have heard from many riders that streetcar service slows down significantly as soon as they travel outside the current priority area. We hope that city staff will look beyond the current boundaries of the pilot to investigate the potential of extending the measures beyond Bathurst and Jarvis.

3. Ensure the permanent design is accessible for transit riders and pedestrians

Getting on and off the streetcar should be safe and easy for people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Based on the increased ridership, sidewalks and other areas around streetcar stops also need to provide enough room to safely pass people who are waiting.

Replicate it across the city

The success of this pilot demonstrates why giving transit priority on busy streets is so important.

We see the King Street Pilot as a critical demonstration of low-cost solutions, at a total capital cost of about \$3 million, to improve our transit network. To make the most of our resources, it is imperative that we make bold moves to prioritize transit so that 75 people on a bus aren't stuck daily behind a string of single passenger vehicles.

The TTC and city staff have been urging City Council to prioritize transit on busy and overcrowded bus routes across the city for the past 20 years. And even transit priority measures that have been approved, like much needed queue-jump lanes, are taking years to complete.

¹ <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-131188.pdf>



Bus routes on Lawrence Ave. West, Dufferin, Weston Rd, Keel St., Wilson Ave. and many more need a suite of transit priority measures to address unreliable service due to traffic congestion. Transit priority is the most effective way to improve existing service and make every dollar go as far as possible and relieve the worst traffic congestion in Toronto by making transit better and easier option.

We thank you for taking bold action to make service on King Street work, and ask that you keep a i nves t in a low-cost solution that works - and replicate this success as quickly as possible on the rest of our traffic congested surface transit network.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anna Lermer
Project Coordinator
TTCriders

Summary of Common Feedback & Recommendations

1. Transit Service

- Enhance service during peak hours to address overcrowding due to the major increase in ridership along the 504 streetcar route.
- Pilot extending the length of the transit priority area to further improve the reliability and travel times and better serve more riders, including neighbourhoods like Liberty Village, Corktown Commons, St. Lawrence, and Parkdale. While the pilot has improved commutes for people well beyond the current boundaries, we have heard from many riders that streetcar service slows down significantly as soon as they travel outside the current priority area.
- Remove or reduce exemptions that significantly disrupt service. City staff noted that late evening travel times are 30% higher than in the early evening periods. During these off-peak times service is still frequent and over 2,400 passengers ride the streetcar daily after 10pm.

2. Accessibility & Safety

- Fully accessible stops along the length of the route, including bump outs wherever possible. Ramps for boarding streetcars must be safe and stable. During the pilot wheelchair users had to use ramp from the road level, which can be dangerous and unstable.
- Sufficient space around streetcar stops is needed to ensure that it is safe and accessible for people walking or rolling by on the sidewalk. Streetcar stops are often crowded, due to increase in ridership and changes to the streetcar routes.
- Transit service should be frequent enough that crowding does not limit people with wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, or large bags from riding safely.
- More space is needed on the road for cyclists to be passed by a streetcar. Many cyclists feel unsafe when caught between curb installations and the streetcar in the current design.

3. Signage & Wayfinding

- Signage for motorists and pedestrians needs to be very clear.
 - A person who is driving on the street for the first time should be able to navigate the traffic restrictions.

- Advance right turns must be clearly marked for both pedestrians and motorists
- Signage should be illuminated so it can be easily seen by all road users.
- Better wayfinding is needed the length of traffic restriction to help motorists find the nearest available parking. There is ample underground parking in the area, but it can be hard to find.
- Until they are removed, transit stops that are not being used need better signage, as people who are new to the area get confused about where the stop is, causing them to miss the streetcar.

4. Public Realm

- Sidewalks should be widened to accommodate high foot traffic on the street in busy areas.
- Newly available public spaces due to closed curb lanes should be better-utilized
 - Truly usable spaces for pedestrians (people found that some of the public installations did not enhance the space sufficiently to justify the amount of it they took up)
 - More patios for restaurants and bars.
 - Additional commercial activity (vendors, food trucks, artists, etc.)
- More public activation and events, like weekend street festivals and live music. People really enjoyed the street level activations, like winter warm-ups and street hockey games, and want more of it to build community and make King Street into more of a destination for residents across the city.
- More permanent, long-lasting space activations and street furniture that will hold up through the winter and can be used all year long.

5. Enforcement

- Final design should make it easy for motorists to follow traffic restrictions, in addition to big and clear signage.
- Study the potential of using automated cameras that are streetcar or traffic-mounted to improve enforcement and compliance with the restrictions.

6. Local Business

- Pilot projects that will impact the flow of traffic and road user behaviours should be implemented when there is good weather whenever possible. This would help everyone transition more smoothly to new traffic restrictions, public space activations, and changes in customer patterns.
- A comprehensive communications strategy about the changes to King Street to minimize confusion about how to access the street and alternate ways to move around.
- A strategy to provide transitional support to storefront businesses should be developed in collaboration with business improvement areas before the implementation of any major surface transit project.
- Curb-side activity: A sufficient number of drop-off/pick-up zones need to be provided for
 - curbside food pickup and delivery
 - passenger drop-off/pick-up, prioritizing accessibility for people with mobility issues
 - explore more co-use of spaces where there isn't enough room to accommodate for each establishment that would like to apply for one.