

TO:

Toronto City Council
Planning and Housing Committee
TTC Board
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

February 25, 2020

Re: Higher Order Transit Corridor Designation for Lake Shore Boulevard West in Etobicoke

Please add and make publicly accessible my comments to the agenda for the February 26, 2020 City Council meeting on item 2020.PH13.3, Official Plan Review: Transportation - Recommended Official Plan Amendment. I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Dear Members of the TTC Board, Planning and Housing Committee and City Council:

We are writing in support of a Higher Order Transit Corridor designation for Lake Shore Boulevard West (LSBW) between Legion Road and Long Branch Loop and the proposed update to Map 4 of the Official Plan. We also wish to use this opportunity to formally disagree with recent arguments against the designation from local groups that have written to the Planning and Housing Committee and City Council on the matter.

South Etobicoke is already suffering from a lack of adequate transit infrastructure given recent growth in the area. Local service is a patchwork of single-fare and double-fare express buses (944 & 145), community bus routes (176 Mimico GO), and bus route variants with decreased service beyond their forks (66A/B; 76A/B/C; 110A/B/C). These supplementary transit services are a poor substitute for the reliable and efficient rapid transit service the broader community needs and deserves. SETAC has not identified any legitimate over-intensification risks as a direct result of this designation, and we believe related transit improvements are crucial to the long-term livability of our neighbourhoods. However, this new designation must be accompanied by a renewed effort to identify a right-of-way (ROW) solution along Lake Shore Boulevard West that does not include unwanted expropriation and demolition. It is our position that this would be possible with more nuanced study, consultation, and collaboration.

We are also aware that some have suggested that The Queensway should be designated as a Higher Order Transit Corridor instead of Lake Shore Boulevard West. We would like to remind councillors and community members that the Waterfront Transit Reset considered higher order transit on The Queensway and eliminated it from consideration at this time. We agree with those findings and see little justification for prioritizing The Queensway over Lake Shore Boulevard West.

To start, Lake Shore Boulevard West already has the track and electrical systems in place to support higher order transit. The Queensway does not. Although Lake Shore Boulevard West has a few narrow

and thus limiting segments for transit expansion, that is also true of The Queensway between Park Lawn Road and Royal York Road. The Queensway is also less than 10 minutes to the Line 2 (Bloor) subway by bus, and service runs as frequently as 1-3 minutes during peak service. There is no incentive for transit users originating from points along Lake Shore Boulevard West to disembark at The Queensway and wait for another downtown-bound vehicle: they will arrive at the subway in as few as five additional minutes by simply remaining on the bus. The 80 Queensway bus is evidence of this, as ridership is much lower than any of the north-south bus routes.

GO, meanwhile, is not currently nor will it ever be a rapid transit solution for all of south Etobicoke. Very few residents both live and work near the limited number of Toronto GO stations and are thus unable to commute on GO service alone. South Etobicoke GO ridership figures show just 3,000 combined daily riders at Mimico and Long Branch GO stations, which pales in comparison to the 40,000+ combined daily riders on bus routes connecting Lake Shore Boulevard West to the subway. Although this corridor is key to efficiently connecting all south Etobicoke residents to GO service at Long Branch and Park Lawn, combining TTC and GO is prohibitively expensive at \$13.80 for a return fare. As we have seen recently, any fare reductions are subject to the whims of provincial and municipal governments. With recent fare increases and loss of the Discounted Double Fare program, local GO ridership figures are likely to drop with many riders reverting to their car.

Better, more reliable transit for south Etobicoke was first identified as a need in the 1993 Waterfront West LRT EA. The Waterfront West LRT was included in the 2007 Transit City plan and Metrolinx's 2008 "The Big Move" 15-year plan. However, we continue to see persistent delays in funding allocation for the project, and the timeline for execution continues to extend. While we are happy to see the Higher Order Transit Corridor designation and the planning protections that come with it, we are deeply concerned that the Waterfront West LRT received no mention within the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan and 10-Year Outlook. City Council did identify a very minor segment of the Waterfront West LRT as a priority in April of 2019, but that work was not included in the 2020 budget. Instead, the City has prioritized other transit infrastructure projects in neighbourhoods with lower existing and planned densities.

While we believe some of the opposition to the Higher Order Transit Corridor designation has been framed inaccurately, SETAC has long been unhappy with the one-size-fits-all LRT schematic for LSBW presented to residents during the Transit City consultations. The scope of expropriation and demolition conveyed was insensitive to our communities and to the history and streetscape of our main thoroughfare. During the Waterfront Transit Reset consultations, SETAC submitted extensive feedback encouraging the exploration of a range of enhanced transit options, including peak-hour transit priority lanes, the addition of more streetcar boarding islands, and the establishment of separated rights of way. While against any unwanted expropriation or demolition, that support came with an understanding and acceptance that some reductions in street parking and vehicular turning movements may be necessary and worthwhile.

We believe the Waterfront West LRT, between Legion Rd. and Exhibition Loop, must be better prioritized and advanced in the near term. Development in Humber Bay Shores is already set to exceed our current infrastructure's capabilities, as First Capital's development on the former Mr. Christie site will increase the population in the immediate area to over 40,000 residents—10,000 more than the entirety of

Orangeville in an area less than 1 km². We are also seeing significant intensification planned for surrounding communities that will directly impact Lake Shore Boulevard West, including the Mimico Triangle, Sherway, and the Lakeview community in Mississauga. These surrounding communities also need attractive transit connections to entice commuters and keep cars off our local roads. Higher order transit from Long Branch to the core will play a part and a Waterfront West LRT ROW between Legion Road to Exhibition Loop would provide reliable and efficient transit service to an Ontario Line transfer point and further subway connections.

This Higher Order Transit Corridor designation is a good first step toward the goal of substantively improving transit in south Etobicoke. Planning and funding must follow to ensure we are meeting demand and not falling further behind. These related transit infrastructure improvements are vital to the future of south Etobicoke, beginning with the much-needed Waterfront West LRT between Legion Road and Exhibition Loop. We must then continue with renewed study and community consultation to best implement a streetcar right-of-way along Lake Shore Boulevard West without extensive and unwanted expropriation and demolition of the community's built heritage.

Sincerely,

David Meurer & Randy Barba
Co-Chairs
SETAC (South Etobicoke Transit Action Committee)
www.SETAC.ca

CC:

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Mark Grimes, Toronto City Councillor, Etobicoke Lakeshore
Ana Bailão, Toronto City Councillor, Planning and Housing Committee Chair
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