

ActiveTO Next Steps for 2021: Supplementary Report

Date: April 6, 2021

To: City Council

From: General Manager, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward(s) affected or All

SUMMARY

Throughout 2020, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services Division introduced a variety of COVID-19 response programs in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health to accommodate the need for residents to be outside of their homes while physical distancing. These programs, including ActiveTO, transformed Toronto's streets to support the city during the first summer of the pandemic.

ActiveTO was composed of three main programs; Major Road Closures, Quiet Streets and Cycling Network Expansion. This set of programs enabled the largest expansion of cycling infrastructure in the City's history and supported thousands of safe cycling and walking trips to essential services and recreation for mental and physical health.

On March 23, 2021, Infrastructure and Environment Committee (IEC) endorsed the recommendations of IE 20.12 ActiveTO - Lessons Learned from 2020 and Next Steps for 2021, and requested that (1) the General Manager, Transportation Services report directly to the April 7 and 8, 2021 City Council meeting on the following:

- a. opportunities to accommodate Lake Shore Boulevard West ActiveTO partial or full closures on select weekends or consider alternate ActiveTO installations, similar to Bayview Avenue;
- b. opportunities for additional ActiveTO locations, including on the Exhibition Place grounds; and
- c. opportunities to accelerate traffic-calming in local neighbourhoods through the refocused efforts mentioned in the report, and creating enhanced Quiet Streets, based on lessons learned in 2020, as well as opportunities for a Quiet Neighbourhoods approach where appropriate.

In addition, IEC requested that (2) the General Manager, Transportation Services work with the Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Transit Commission to identify any potential impacts to transit customers using shuttle buses during Toronto Transit Commission

closures, the Automatic Train Control rollout and the proposed Yonge midtown complete street pilot, with attention paid to Yonge Street north of St. Clair Avenue, and to report directly to the April 7 and 8, 2021 City Council meeting on opportunities to mitigate the impact on transit customers.

This report responds to the above requests from IEC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council amend City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 937, Temporary Closing of Highways, to delegate to the General Manager, Transportation Services, until December 31, 2021, inclusive, the authority to temporarily close to motor vehicle traffic (not including bicycles), Black Creek Drive, between Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road, and W.R. Allen Road, between Lawrence Avenue West and Eglinton Avenue West, for a period up to and including 4 consecutive days, but ending no later than December 31, 2021, inclusive, as required for the purpose of ActiveTO.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 23, 2021, Infrastructure and Environment Committee (IEC) endorsed the recommendations of IE 20.12 ActiveTO - Lessons Learned from 2020 and Next Steps for 2021, and requested that (1) the General Manager, Transportation Services report directly to the April 7 and 8, 2021 City Council meeting to provide more information on several matters.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE20.12>

COMMENTS

ActiveTO Major Road Closures

Major Road Closures are recurring short-term closures (i.e. weekends and holidays) of major streets adjacent to highly utilized trails to provide more space for walking and cycling, thus enabling physical distancing. The program launched in May 2020 and continued into October 2020. The weekend closures provided space for thousands of people to be active, respect physical distancing and contributed to the overall well-being of residents.

Under Consideration - Lake Shore Boulevard West

As was noted in the report to IEC, the Lake Shore Boulevard West Major Road Closures were highly used by people walking, running and cycling in 2020, and helped people to maintain physical distance on weekends, when the Martin Goodman Trail was crowded.

Major construction is currently underway at the intersection of King-Queen-Queensway-Roncesvalles (KQQR) and The Queensway from Parkside Drive to Roncesvalles Avenue which is scheduled to continue until August 2022.

State-of-good-repair work includes replacing Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) streetcar track, overhead wire infrastructure, watermain, and sewer infrastructure in this area, as well as improvements to surface transit priority and safety as per the City's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, as outlined below.

At the KQQR Intersection:

- A normal four-leg intersection at KQQR instead of current skewed intersection;
- Removal of existing eastbound right-turn channel, which will improve pedestrian safety and accessibility as per the City's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan;
- Traffic signal phasing to be changed from three signal phases to a standard two phase operation; and
- Expansion and improvements at Beaty Boulevard Park (southwest corner).

Along the Queensway:

- Extension of dedicated TTC streetcar right-of-way from west of Claude Avenue to Roncesvalles Avenue to reduce delays and improve service reliability (Will feature: curbs on the north and south sides of the streetcar lanes to physically separate from vehicle traffic);
- New traffic signal at Sunnyside Avenue to improve pedestrian safety, access to St. Joseph's Health Centre and movement of streetcars from Sunnyside Avenue Loop;
- Improved accessibility at TTC streetcar platforms;
- Widening of existing eastbound platform;
- Transit signal priority at Glendale Avenue and Roncesvalles Avenue;
- Improved traffic movement with new eastbound left-turn lanes at Glendale Avenue, Sunnyside Avenue and Roncesvalles Avenue;
- Improved pedestrian safety with north-south crossing on both sides of the intersection at Glendale Avenue; and
- Safer cycling connection with extension of dedicated eastbound bicycle lane on The Queensway to Glendale Avenue and a new bike box with dedicated bicycle signal.

Along Roncesvalles Avenue and Queen Street:

- Two raised streetcar platforms/bicycle facilities on Roncesvalles Avenue, just north of Queen Street West; and
- New accessible eastbound farside platform on the south side of Queen Street West, east of Roncesvalles Avenue.

Advance work began in September 2020 with rehabilitation of the Parkside Bridge on The Queensway, and more recently with watermain replacement and sewer relining work on all traffic lanes approaching the KQQR intersection.

During this construction, the KQQR intersection will be closed with exception of limited east-west access through a bypass the intersection via either King Street West or Queen Street West.

A map of the work area, depicting the traffic restrictions currently in place is included below.

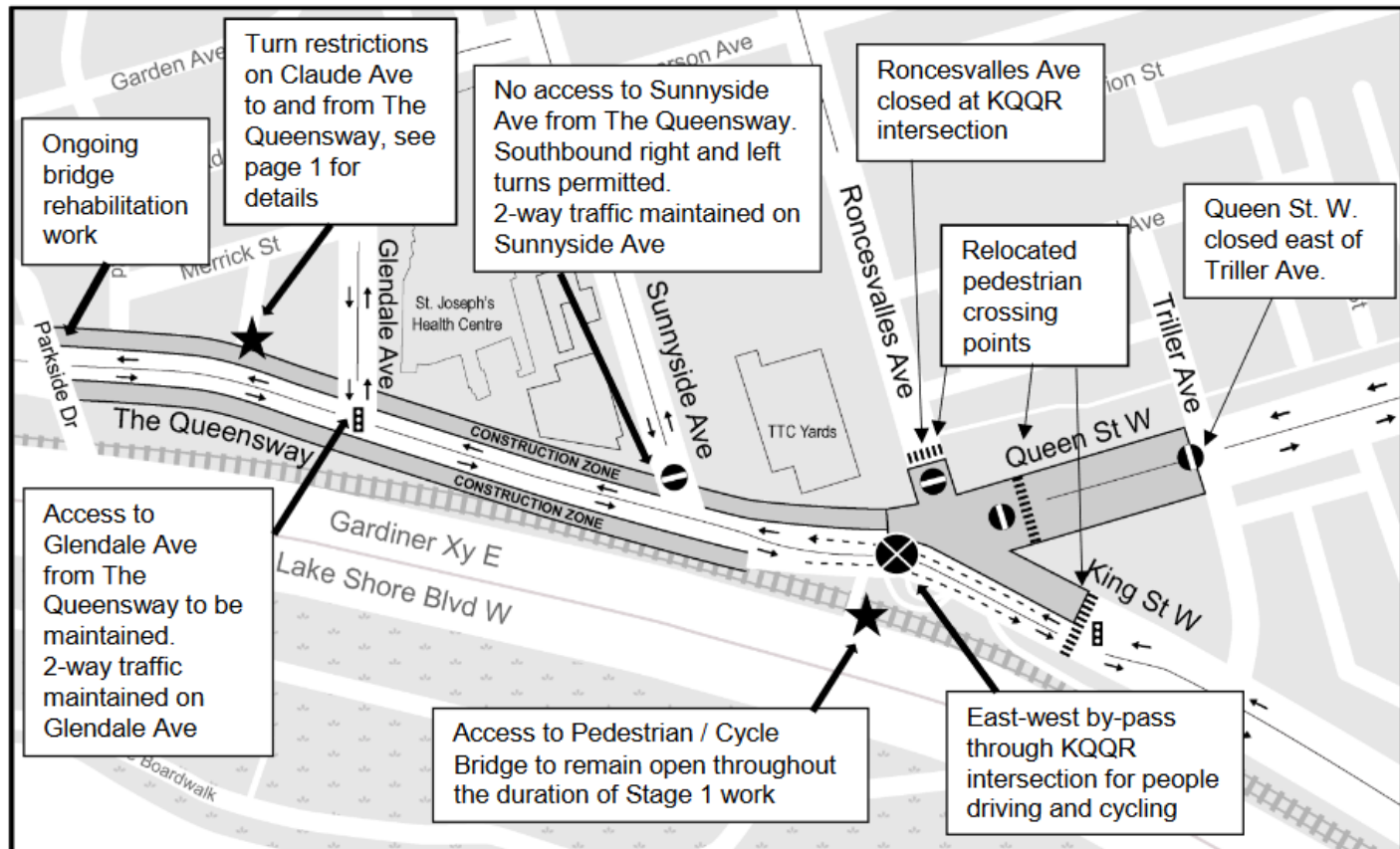


Figure 1 - Map of KQQR

During this construction, TTC Service impacts include the replacement of the 501/301 Queen Streetcar and 504 King Streetcar routes with bus service re-routing.

Toronto Paramedic Services has also advised that Lake Shore Boulevard West is part of their re-routing plans during the KQQR construction. St. Joseph's Health Centre is located just to the west of the KQQR intersection.

Given the road network in the surrounding area, the next closest east-west major roadways in this vicinity are Bloor Street West to the north and Lake Shore Boulevard West / The Gardiner Expressway.

While the Lake Shore Boulevard West Major Road Closures were highly used by people walking, running and cycling in 2020, they also resulted in motor vehicle traffic delay, particularly on the Gardiner Expressway and The Queensway. Data shows that closing Lake Shore Boulevard West resulted in traffic delays on the Gardiner Expressway as well as The Queensway / Queen Street West. When the closures were in place travel times on The Queensway / Queen Street West, from Islington Avenue to Bathurst Street showed delays comparable to pre-pandemic levels on a typical weekend. On the Gardiner Expressway, these delays exceeded pre-pandemic levels, in particular between Islington Avenue and Jameson Avenue.

As a result of the KQQR project outlined above, recurring weekend closures of Lake Shore Boulevard West may not be able to be accommodated in 2021/2022 in the same way as they were in 2020.

Data on summer traffic volumes in the vicinity of this construction is being monitored to further inform if closures of Lake Shore Boulevard West can be accommodated for the ActiveTO program in a modified way in 2021 such as:

- Recurring Saturday closures (set-up overnight Friday and take-down overnight Sunday); and/or
- Long weekend and/or statutory holiday closures (i.e. Victoria Day May 22-24, Canada Day July 1 / July 3 - 4, Civic Holiday (July 31 - August 2), and Labour Day (September 4 - 6).

Consideration was also given to accommodating shorter duration closures on Sunday mornings, or closing one or two eastbound lanes on Lake Shore Boulevard West. Shortening the duration of the closure to Sunday mornings when traffic is at its lightest is a challenge due to the length of time it takes to set-up and take-down the closure. It takes approximately 5 hours to set-up the closure and a further 5 hours to remove it. For this reason the time period of the impact to traffic would include all of Sunday afternoon. Reducing the width of the closure to just one or two eastbound lanes on Lake Shore Boulevard West would require the installation of concrete barriers due to the speeds of the adjacent traffic on Lake Shore Boulevard West. The time required for the set-up and take-down time of these barriers precludes closing these lanes for weekend closures. Leaving the lanes closed all summer would lead to increased delays during the week when traffic volumes are higher than weekend traffic.

Under Consideration - Other Locations for ActiveTO including on the Exhibition Place Grounds

Alternative locations to provide a Major Road Closure in the west-end of the downtown core are also being considered, such as the potential for roadways within Exhibition Place to contribute to ActiveTO in consultation with Exhibition Place as per recommendation TE 18.42 approved by City Council in September 2020.

Transportation Services staff are working with Exhibition Place to explore opportunities for ActiveTO. There are a number of activities still taking place on the grounds which will have to be accommodated in consultation with their staff and the tenants in the various buildings. The TTC is also using the Exhibition Place roads for part of the diversion route for the KQQR construction.

Transportation Services is considering opportunities to extend the benefits of this initiative beyond the downtown core, subject to consultation with local Councillors. Corridors that may be appropriate to consider for additional major road closures should have limited business impacts, minimal intersections and access points where barricades or paid duty officers are required, and no major construction conflicts.

Two locations that are currently under consideration, subject to further review and consultation with local Councillors are:

- Allen Road Expressway, one direction, between Lawrence Avenue West and Eglinton Avenue West; and
- Black Creek Drive, one direction, between Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road.

As both of these locations would require Council authority to close as per the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 937 - Temporary Closing of Highways, this report proposes to delegate to the General Manager, Transportation Services, until December 31, 2021, inclusive, the authority to temporarily close to motor vehicle traffic, Black Creek Drive, between Lawrence Avenue West and Weston Road, and W.R. Allen Road, between Lawrence Avenue West and Eglinton Avenue West, for a period up to and including 4 consecutive days, but ending no later than December 31, 2021, inclusive, for the purpose of ActiveTO.

In coordination with local Councillors, it is proposed that new ActiveTO Major Road Closures would be programmed as a trial on weekends in the early summer on a segment of roadway to assess the level of participation, feedback from the community, and any unforeseen transportation network impacts before determining a go-forward approach for the remainder of 2021.

Alternatively, opportunities to encourage and support the use of existing multi-use trail corridors beyond the downtown core are also being explored.

ActiveTO Quiet Streets

A total of 65km of Quiet Streets were introduced in approximately 30 locations to make it safer and easier for people to maintain physical distance while walking and cycling on local streets during COVID-19. The program utilized temporary signage and barricades to slow vehicular traffic and encourage a shared use of the roadway. This program was designed to enable trips to essential businesses as well as recreational access to the outdoors in the earliest days of the pandemic, when parks were closed and norms of social distancing and mask wearing were not yet established.

The ActiveTO Quiet Street program was delivered through reassignment of existing staff resources while placing normal functions on hold and an increase in lieu and overtime hours. Since the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restart of many of the normal functions of staff including Community Council reports, Traffic Operations investigations and Area Transportation Planning, the reallocation of staff for the ActiveTO Quiet Streets program is no longer possible without impacts to normal functions, nor recommended.

This program reinforced the City's understanding that neighbourhoods across Toronto are eager to see traffic managed on local streets to make walking and cycling easier and safer, by having traffic speeds and volumes lower, but not if it comes with a very limited range of temporary interventions, basic materials, and limited community consultation. Communities expect safer and more pleasant streets to be a beautiful and lasting outcome of collaborative design.

In 2021, Transportation Services recommends refocusing the approach to local street calming through existing programs including:

- The Council-adopted Traffic Calming Policy and related programs - over 150 speed humps are installed each year through this program. Continued use of a tactical approach to temporary traffic calming delivery, similar to what was undertaken through Quiet Streets could be deployed on a street-based approach or neighbourhood-based approach, where appropriate, and subject to available staff resources;
- Speed limit reductions on local roads - report [IE20.15](#) the City Council meeting agenda for April 7 and 8, 2021 proposes a new approach to 30 kilometre per hour on public lanes and local roads in Designated Speed Limit Areas across the City;
- Implementation and enhancement of School Safety Zones and Community Safety Zones in approximately 100 locations per year;
- The Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) program which rotates 50 speed enforcement devices around Community Safety Zone locations on 3-4 month rotations; and
- Neighbourhood-scale mobility and traffic management planning.

In addition, several 2020 Quiet Street routes are in the City's near-term Cycling Network Plan and are proposed to be redesigned to make cycling and walking safer and easier, and often involve design elements that reduce speed and vehicular traffic infiltration. Several routes are proposed for implementation in 2021, including The Esplanade and Mill Street, Winona Drive, as well as Woodfield Road and Monarch Park Avenue, subject to City Council approval. Local Councillors and communities are being or will soon be consulted in the evaluation of design options for these streets.

ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot - TTC Impacts

Transportation Services is seeking City Council authority to undertake broader community consultation and implement a temporary complete streets pilot project on Yonge Street between Bloor Street and Davisville Avenue / Chaplin Crescent, subject to further review of these limits and potential impact to surface transit operations as part of the detailed design process.

Similar to Destination Danforth, this project would focus on supporting local main street businesses and include features such as CaféTO on-street patios, streetscape improvements, temporary bikeways, space for parking, loading, and deliveries, as well as road safety improvements. Operational elements focused on monitoring and mitigating the impact of traffic infiltration onto local streets within the surrounding neighbourhood would also be included.

Transportation Services is working with TTC staff to ensure the proposed design adequately accommodates TTC bus stops, minimizes the impact to transit, and improves the street environment for transit users. Wheel-Trans and accessibility needs are also key considerations in the proposed design.

Comments from TTC Staff:

With regards to TTC service along the proposed ActiveTO Midtown temporary Complete Street pilot on Yonge Street, and along bike lanes in general, TTC staff provide the following information.

TTC Service and Changes to Streets with ActiveTO Complete Street Pilots

TTC staff have worked with City staff in Transportation Services to ensure that the design of new complete street configurations appropriately accommodate TTC customers boarding, alighting and travelling on buses. In particular, the effects of both permanent and temporary bike lane installations along the Line 2 Bloor-Danforth corridor have been carefully designed, and similar planning is taking place for the proposed complete street pilot along the Line 1 Yonge corridor, drawing on operating experience and lessons learned.

Along the Yonge Street and Bloor Street / Danforth Avenue corridors, the streets must accommodate every-day infrequent daytime service, every-day frequent overnight service, and occasional frequent shuttle bus operations. To do this, bus stops are designed to be long enough to accommodate buses and appropriate space is provided for customers to wait for, board, and alight from buses. The accessibility of the stops for customers who use mobility devices is provided by having sufficient clear space at the bus front door. Lane widths are a minimum of 3.3 metres to fit the buses. In order to ensure all of these requirements, adjustments are made to the location of some bus stops and the design of adjacent bike lanes and car parking.

In all cases, the street design, including bike lanes and bus stops, are safe for TTC bus operation.

On Yonge Street, particularly between Davisville Avenue and St. Clair Avenue, there is a need to permit effective TTC shuttle bus operations, particularly in the southbound direction, especially during the next 18 months during subway closures for Automated Train Control (ATC) Resignalling and other necessary subway maintenance work.

TTC staff have consulted with Transportation Services and agreed that in addition to the design best practices described above, proposed traffic management mitigation initiatives along Yonge Street will ensure public transit vehicles have priority movement over general traffic during the planned shuttle services for subway closures.

TTC and Transportation Services staff have discussed a design option for the ActiveTO Midtown complete street pilot that would include two southbound lanes between Davisville Avenue and Heath Street (north of St. Clair Avenue) in order to better support shuttle bus services moving in general traffic through this segment.

Well in advance of where lanes are reduced to one through lane in each direction on the approach to St. Clair Avenue, traffic management measures including electronic signage, deployment of traffic management agents, and signage encouraging motor vehicles to divert to alternate routes will allow for more capacity for public transit vehicle movements.

On this basis, TTC is satisfied with the proposed ActiveTO Midtown temporary Complete Street pilot on Yonge Street as the basis for more complete design.

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