

Lake Shore Boulevard East, Bridge and Public Realm Project - Don River to Carlaw Avenue: Traffic Mitigation and Outreach Update

Date: October 12, 2021

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 14, Toronto - Danforth

SUMMARY

In response to a request from Infrastructure and Environment Committee at its meeting on September 14, 2021, this report provides information and updates on a number of matters regarding the reconstruction of Lake Shore Boulevard East from the Don River to Carlaw Avenue, in accordance with the approved Environmental Assessment for the Port Lands Flood Protection project and the Council-adopted Gardiner Strategic Rehabilitation Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with the above recommendation.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the financial impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on October 1, 2021, City Council received the staff report entitled " Lake Shore Boulevard East, Bridge and Public Realm Project - Don River to Carlaw Avenue:

Traffic Mitigation and Outreach Update" for information. In its decision Council also directed that City and Waterfront Toronto staff report back to the October 26, 2021 meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee regarding further updates to the project's communication plan and a north/south cycling connection between Logan Avenue and Leslie Street.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE24.13>

At its meeting on July 14, 2021, City Council adopted recommendations authorizing the installation of temporary bicycle lanes and cycle tracks along with associated temporary traffic signals and amendments to traffic and parking regulations as part of mitigative measures required to reduce impacts associated with the reconstruction of the Lake Shore Boulevard East bridge over the Don River and right-of-way between Don Roadway and Carlaw Avenue. In its decision Council also directed that City and Waterfront Toronto staff report back to the September 14, 2021 meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee regarding the project's communication plan to affected area residents and businesses regarding the proposed mitigative traffic measures.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE23.13>

At its meeting on December 16, 2020 City Council authorized the General Manager, Transportation Services to execute a Project Delivery Agreement with Waterfront Toronto for the reconstruction of Lake Shore Boulevard East between the Don River and Carlaw Avenue, including the Lake Shore Boulevard bridge and all required active transportation and public realm components.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.IE18.3>

COMMENTS

In response to a request from Council at its meeting on September 14, 2021, this report provides information and updates on the following items:

- The feasibility of a north/south cycling connection between Logan Avenue and Leslie Street for an additional cycling route;
- A separated cycling connection between Logan Avenue and Carlaw Avenue, south of Lake Shore Boulevard East during Stage 2 of construction;
- Action taken to improve the cycling and pedestrian detour since September 3, 2021;
- Updated communications plan and schedule;
- Updated traffic management plan;
- Update on Zone of Influence for noise monitoring needs;
- The plan to provide the City of Toronto with regular updates on public notifications, cycling and pedestrian safety; and
- The plan to provide regular public update on issues identified and mitigation measures.

Cycling Infrastructure

As part of the Port Lands Flood Protection Project and Enabling Infrastructure Project (PLFP), and the Lake Shore Boulevard East, Bridge and Public Realm (LSBE) Projects, Waterfront Toronto will undertake the following construction projects:

- Reconstruction of the Lower Don River Bridge; and
- Reconfiguration of Lake Shore Boulevard East, from Don Roadway and Carlaw Avenue.

The construction staging operations for the above projects require the closure of the multi-use trail (Lake Shore Boulevard East Trail) and the existing boulevard space on the north side of Lake Shore Boulevard East from Q4 2021 to Q4 2024. In addition, alternating closures of the eastbound and westbound traffic lanes on Lake Shore Boulevard East, between Don Roadway and Carlaw Avenue will be in effect.

Following a secondary review of the construction phasing plan and schedule, it has been determined feasible to maintain the Lake Shore Boulevard East Trail, between Carlaw Avenue and Logan Avenue to accommodate both pedestrian and cycling movements. The utility work and streetscape improvements will be phased in order to maintain a connection for people walking and cycling throughout the entirety of the project. Therefore, the existing north/south cycling route on Logan Avenue and east/west trail on the north side of Lake Shore Boulevard East will serve as a continuous connection to the newly-established detour route through the Port Lands.

As previously mentioned above, the road reconstruction on Lake Shore Boulevard East will close the Lake Shore Boulevard East Trail, between Don Roadway and Carlaw Avenue. In order to accommodate people cycling around the work zone, uni-directional cycle tracks, with jersey barriers separating the cycle track from the motor vehicle lanes, have been installed on both sides of Commissioners Street, between Logan Avenue and Carlaw Avenue, as described in Attachment 1. The detour route on the subject section of Commissioners Street will remain in place until the end of the project (December 31, 2024).

Communication and Public Outreach

Prior to the commencement of the project, Waterfront Toronto in consultation with City staff developed a comprehensive communication plan. Details of the plan were provided in the staff report of October 1, 2021 which noted key highlights of the plan include the following:

- Outreach regarding traffic impacts and proposed mitigation in the zone of impact;
- City-wide communications regarding traffic impacts;
- Adherence to the Provincially approved Complaints Protocols for both the Port Lands Flood Protection and Gardiner East EA projects, including potential expansion of the existing Port Lands Flood Protection Construction Liaison Committee; and
- Regular construction and traffic notices circulated to the Port Lands Flood Protection contact list and, as needed, via City networks.

In addition to the above, the communication plan also contained provisions for information signage at strategic points along the Lower Don Trail and Martin Goodman Trail. This signage is intended to reflect updated information to the City of Toronto's cycling map and Waterfront Toronto's digital notifications regarding cycling detours.

Phase 1 of the Lake Shore Boulevard project includes the demolition of the Gardiner Expressway access ramps to Lake Shore Boulevard East in the vicinity of Logan Avenue. The major demolition work including the removal of the deck, bents and steel beams took place over five weekends starting on September 3rd and concluding on the weekend of October 1st. The heavy nature of this work required the full closure of both the east and westbound lanes of Lake Shore Boulevard East from Cherry Street east to Carlaw Avenue and the implementation of associated traffic and cycling detours.

While the communication plan was developed for the project as a whole, it was understood that the extensive nature of the Gardiner Expressway ramp removal and the associated full weekend closures of Lake Shore Boulevard required a robust approach and that modifications may be required as the plan was rolled out and feedback received. Accordingly, the communication plan contained provisions for the public circulation of construction notices with details about roadway closures and cycling and traffic detours by a wide range of mediums including digital and print, all of which were implemented prior to the start of construction. To ensure that all City of Toronto standards for public notification were followed, Waterfront Toronto reviewed its communications plan with City staff in advance of implementation. Communications materials developed by Waterfront Toronto were, and will continue to be, reviewed by City staff.

After the first weekend of construction from September 3-7, feedback received from area residents and the public by Waterfront Toronto and City staff indicated that sufficient notice, commensurate with the scale of the closure and the demolition work had not been given. As a result, Waterfront Toronto in consultation with City staff undertook an assessment and modified the communications plan accordingly for the four remaining planned weekend closures (September 10, 17, 24 and October 1). These additional measures, which took effect in time for the weekend closure on September 10 included the direct distribution of flyers, door-to-door, to residents on Carlaw Avenue, Morse Street, and Empire Avenue. Among other information about the project, these flyers noted turning restrictions, change in street direction and parking restrictions and suggested alternatives.

Additionally, the schedule for digital notices was modified to include a weekly update and reports regarding ongoing mitigation efforts by Waterfront Toronto to resolve issues raised. This was circulated in advance of weekend closures via the following networks:

- PLFP construction notice list;
- CreateTO tenants
- Councillor Paula Fletcher's newsletter; and
- Waterfront Toronto social media accounts: Twitter, Facebook.

On October 6 2021, an online Public Information Centre was held about the project. This information was reviewed with the 130 meeting participants and a summary, including answers to all questions, will be available at PortLandsTO.ca.

These enhanced measures, combined with the provisions of the communications plan, appear to have increased the effectiveness of providing residents with the required information based on the reduced number of complaints received. During and after the first weekend of demolition, Waterfront Toronto received 30 complaints via phone, email, Twitter and online form. After adjustments, complaints had reduced to 15 by the second weekend of construction (September 10-13).

In total, over the course of the five weekend closures, Waterfront Toronto received -- both directly and via City channels -- complaints from 136 people. The majority of complaints received related to traffic and cycling detours. As per Waterfront Toronto's practices and requirements, a detailed comment/complaints log for this project is maintained by Waterfront Toronto and is shared as required with City staff. All of this feedback and information was assessed by Waterfront Toronto in collaboration with its traffic consultants and Transportation Services and additional measures were identified to address the issues raised. This approach will continue throughout the remainder of the project.

As noted above, the communications plan, along with proposed mitigative measures for the project were developed with the understanding that modifications may be required as feedback is received from the general public and other interested parties. As such, Waterfront Toronto continues to provide regular opportunities for the public to submit comments, concerns and general feedback through digital media as well as through the established Construction Liaison Committee and Public Information Centres. As noted above, a Public Information Centre was held on October 6 and the feedback received during that session has been taken back and will be used to identify any further modifications that may be required.

Noise

Over the course of the five weekends of demolition work, Waterfront Toronto received a total of thirteen noise complaints from eight people.

Of these complaints, two were from members of the public outside the predicted zone of influence for noise. All received noise complaints were investigated by consultants reporting to EllisDon, the Construction Manager responsible for the project. Based on data collected from monitoring at the site boundary, noise associated with the demolition work did not exceed the permitted threshold during the period of time identified by the complainant.

Noise thresholds for this project were selected to minimize disturbance to the surrounding area considering the City Noise by-law and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks Noise Pollution Control publication NPC-115. The threshold for noise is 85 dBA during daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.) and 80 dBA for

nighttime hours (11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.), measured at the construction boundary. The selected limits are also consistent with the Ministry of Labour's worker exposure limits.

Although noise associated with the demolition work did not exceed permitted thresholds, it can still be disruptive to area residents. As such, all noise complaints were fully investigated to determine whether there were ways to minimize the disturbance to residents. Investigations of early noise complaints concluded that loud noise during the removal of the Gardiner Expressway deck was amplified when jackhammers came into contact with steel beams, creating a loud and resonant sound. EllisDon accordingly directed the contractor to modify its demolition activities and this appears to have been effective in reducing the number of day-time noise complaints received.

Overall, the primary source of noise was associated with the demolition activity, which ended on October 4, 2021. As the project advances, it is not anticipated that significant noise or vibration will be created during reconstruction of Lake Shore Boulevard East or the Lake Shore Bridge. Waterfront Toronto will however continue to monitor for any complaints related to noise over the course of the project and will ensure any received complaints are investigated and corrective actions are taken when possible.

Carlaw/Commissioners/Villiers Cycling Detours and Signage

Although Waterfront Toronto delineated proposed cycling detour routes, signage and safety measures in its Transportation Management Plan, all of the elements of the detours proposed were not fully implemented before the construction started. Feedback received from people cycling during the first weekend of construction activity indicated that actions intended to provide clarity and safety were not implemented in a timely manner. Waterfront Toronto together with its consultants and in consultation with City staff undertook an assessment and identified actions to improve the situation. In addition to feedback received by the City and Waterfront Toronto, a site ride was organized with a local cycling group (Ward 14 Bikes), which identified areas requiring enhanced signage and/or additional safety measures.

As a result of the above process, the following measures have been implemented for the cycling facilities south of Lake Shore Boulevard East as follows:

- Carlaw Avenue, between Lake Shore Boulevard East and Commissioners Street: A multi-use trail located on the east boulevard, separated from vehicular traffic, has been constructed and is operational;
- Commissioners Street, between Carlaw Avenue and Saulter Street South: Between Carlaw Avenue and Bouchette Street, unidirectional cycle tracks were installed and are separated from vehicular traffic by concrete jersey barriers except where driveways are present or at intersections. Between Bouchette and Saulter Street South unidirectional buffered bike lanes were installed with separation delineated by pavement markings to accommodate access for businesses and turning radii;
- Saulter Street South: A bi-directional cycle track is currently in place with traffic barrels connected by temporary barricade bars. A design revision is currently in process and will involve lane reconfigurations on Saulter Street at Villiers Street and Commissioners Street and Saulter St as well as the installation of physical separation; and

- Villiers Street: Uni-directional cycle tracks are in place as per the approved design. All sections where concrete jersey barriers were to be installed have been completed. Sections that are to have concrete curbs are currently separated using traffic barrels connected with temporary barricade bars as an interim measure, pending delivery of the concrete curbs.

Consultation will continue throughout the remainder of the project as feedback is received. Waterfront Toronto will continue to address comments and where possible, implement modifications in coordination with the City.

Traffic Management Plan Update

A summary of the lessons learned from observations of operations with the Logan Avenue Ramps closures and traffic management measures implemented is listed in the table below.

Observations from Logan Avenue Ramp Closures	Source	Actions/Lessons Learned
Traffic infiltration and speeding on local streets north of Lake Shore Boulevard during first few weeks of closures	Public / Local Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented turn restrictions at impacted streets to minimize cut through traffic • Worked with City's Work Zone Coordination Group to request additional enforcement

Observations from Logan Avenue Ramp Closures	Source	Actions/Lessons Learned
Increased travel times and congestion due to removal of ramps and difficulty accessing westbound Jarvis On-Ramp to the Gardiner Expressway	Public / Local Councillor / Businesses / Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Agents at critical locations including Jarvis Street / Lake Shore Boulevard intersection during afternoon peak period • Need to pre-empt key locations where Traffic Agents and/or Paid Duty Officers should be deployed during first week of new staging closures
Increased travel times and congestion due to removal of ramps and key arterials on alternative routes have lane closures due to construction	Public / Local Councillor / Businesses / Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Agents at critical locations including Jarvis Street / Lake Shore Boulevard intersection during afternoon peak period • Need to pre-empt key locations where Traffic Agents and/or Paid Duty Officers should be deployed during first week of new staging closures
Increased travel times and congestion due to removal of ramps and key arterials on alternative routes have lane closures due to construction	Public / Local Councillor / Businesses / Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to continue working with City to ensure parallel City closures are minimized

Observations from Logan Avenue Ramp Closures	Source	Actions/Lessons Learned
Delays at key intersections (Jarvis Street, Lower Sherbourne Street, Parliament Street) along Lake Shore Boulevard	Public / Local Councillor / Businesses / Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit conducted to observe operations issues at intersections and make signal timings adjustments to help reduce delays • Continue to monitor these intersections
Short notice for parking restrictions and changes on local side streets	Public / Local Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed flyers every weekend to ensure residents were aware of changes • Earlier notice will be provided for future closures and changes
Bike detours were not ready in time for closures	Public / Local Councillor / Project Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of bike detours signs, pavement markings and barriers completed • Ensure bike detours as per approved design are in place before future closures
Despite bike signage and wayfinding, some parts of bike detour were confusing	Public / Local Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance signs and wayfinding along detour route • Use enhanced signs for future detours

Observations from Logan Avenue Ramp Closures	Source	Actions/Lessons Learned
Parallel lane closures not recommended in the transportation assessment with the Logan Avenue Ramps closed resulted in significant impacts at several locations	Project Team	Need to consider impacts from unplanned parallel lane closures which were not recommended or considered in the transportation assessment

On the Ground Project Monitoring

As the project proceeds, staff from Waterfront Toronto and its construction manager, EllisDon have been assigned to monitor vehicular and cycling traffic on and around the construction area. Any issues related to signage, cycling, traffic management and/or safety are flagged by staff on site and reviewed by Waterfront Toronto and Transportation Services as required. This is in addition to the City's standard practices and procedures regarding the monitoring of construction activities.

CONTACT

David Stonehouse, Director
Waterfront Secretariat
City Planning
Phone: (416) 392-8113
Email: david.stonehouse@toronto.ca

Jacquelyn Hayward, Director
Project Design & Management
Transportation Services
Phone: (416) 392-5348
Email: jacquelyn.hayward@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Barbara Gray
General Manager, Transportation Services

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Cycling Detour Route - Phase 2

Lake Shore Boulevard East Project: Traffic and Outreach Update