



Emailed to:

City Clerk's Office - John Elvidge clerk@toronto.ca

Council Secretariat Contact - Marilyn Toft councilmeeting@toronto.ca

For distribution to Toronto City Council

June 14, 2022

Dear Toronto City Council,

Letter: Riverside BIA Comments Regarding Council Item EX33.1 Metrolinx Traffic Management Plan Report: "Metrolinx Transit Expansion Projects – Second Quarter 2022"

Following a review of the public report online titled "[Metrolinx Transit Expansion Projects – Second Quarter 2022](https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-226597.pdf)" (<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-226597.pdf>) in relation to City of Toronto Council Item EX33.1, please find the Riverside BIA's comments, questions and requests as follows:

Construction impacts of the Ontario Line are a primary concern for the Riverside Business Improvement Area (BIA) and our 100+ members who are small commercial property owners and businesses. Our BIA spans Queen Street East from Davies Avenue near the Don Valley, to Empire Avenue, just past De Grassi Street and encompasses the area of the future Riverside/Leslieville Queen Street East station and railway crossing of the future Ontario Line at De Grassi Street.

The Support Local movement that emerged during the pandemic and the survival of main street businesses has come out as a clear priority over the past two years and the fragility of the economic health of small businesses has come to the forefront. Businesses, BIAs and the City of Toronto have invested a lot to keep our neighbourhoods alive, maintain local character and vibrancy. We are JUST beginning the recovery process. BUT now Enter THE ONTARIO LINE and this Traffic Management Plan (TMP) report.

Yes, we believe public transit is critically important but it should not be coming at the expense and demise of an already struggling local economy. To safeguard our business community, **this TMP must be clear and direct in putting tangible supports in place for local businesses and BIAs. In its current form it meets neither of these objectives.**

Many lessons should have been learned from the experience of businesses and BIAs on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT project and this current report and plan should ensure there is a robust programme in place for monitoring, prevention, mitigation and compensation for business impacts to the local economy along Queen Street East. Currently it does not and we are overwhelmingly seeing throughout this report the statement "...however, Metrolinx will maintain all business and property access during bridge works" as though

this will be enough to prevent business impacts, losses, and closures. We respectfully disagree.

Businesses depend on having a clear and inviting transport corridor to move goods and attract customers, including on the streets and sidewalks. Our BIA has worked hard for over 40 years with the City to create a vibrant, inviting and unique main street experience. Queen Street East is one of Toronto's busiest arteries for vehicles including transit, trucks, cars and cyclists. The pedestrian realm along Queen is busy throughout the day and into the evening - foot traffic is critical to the success of local businesses! **This TMP, in its current form, proposes to shut down our Queen East corridor in many ways, without measuring nor mitigating the impacts to businesses and BIAs.**

Our specific comments, concerns and requests are as follows.

Note: some of the requests are drawn and expanded upon from the TABIA "Transit Construction Impact Mitigation Principles" report, The Eglinton Way BIA's "BIA Construction Tool-Kit: Lessons Learned from the Eglinton Crosstown". and the Toronto Transit Commission's report "Getting It Right: Lessons from the Implementation of the St. Clair Streetcar for the Implementation of Transit City". The points below were also developed in consultation with other Queen Street BIAs including neighbouring Leslieville BIA and the Queen West BIA, along with TABIA and other member Toronto BIAs.

BUSINESS AND BIA IMPACTS: It is stated in the Metrolinx report: *"Metrolinx will work with City staff, including the Transit Expansion and Economic Development and Culture Divisions to monitor impacts to local businesses. However, Metrolinx has confirmed that it will maintain all business and property accesses during the bridge works."* Riverside's small businesses rely on daily foot traffic to keep their doors open. Metrolinx notes they will maintain all business and property; however, experience on the Eglinton Crosstown LRT project has shown simply not blocking off business doorways is not enough to mitigate business impacts.

- Real-world concerns and examples of what's to come in our area:
 - **Bonjour Brioche (812 Queen E)** - an iconic Toronto business and Riverside BIA member for over 25 years. Bonjour Brioche owners and management have shared that they expect they will need to shut their doors permanently upon commencement of construction for the Ontario Line. They are very concerned that sidewalk access will not be maintained on the north side of Queen East and that dust, noise and vibration mere metres away from them will effectively shut down their busy patios altogether. Further, while the Metrolinx TMP explicitly states that the Cafe on De Grassi (by Bonjour Brioche) will be impacted, no business compensation or direct mitigation to safeguard their operations has been discussed with them.
 - **Tabule Middle Eastern Cuisine (810 Queen E)** - a Riverside business since 2013, a couple doors down from Bonjour Brioche - has shared similar concerns along with questions about how their customers will park and how deliveries will be made, once 6 parking spaces are removed on De Grassi Street;
 - **The Opera House (735 & 737 Queen E)** - an iconic Toronto entertainment venue in Riverside since 1989, has expressed concerns to its operations from the combined traffic impacts from the Gardiner closure and diversions from Lakeshore East, and the Ontario Line construction proposals;
 - **Eastbound Brewing Co (700 Queen E)** - located as far away from the Ontario Line site as Broadview Avenue, are keenly aware of how quickly traffic backs up

on the narrow roadway of Queen Street East with any disruption to flow and are very concerned for their business' survival.

The Eglinton Crosstown LRT project could be used as a model for business and BIA supports - for example use Business Claim forms and implement something like the Eglinton Crosstown Support Grant which is administered by the City BIA office and provides up to \$50,000 for BIA-led projects/programmes affected by the transit project with a schedule of payouts or grants.

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. A Third-Party Monitoring Programme will be put in place ahead of construction commencement by Metrolinx, in coordination with the City of Toronto BIA office and local BIAs, to measure baseline conditions of businesses on Queen Street East, and must be kept in place to record impacts to local business. Collection of accurate quantitative data should be conducted on the impacts of construction on area footfall, consumer in-store spending, traffic patterns/ logistic diversions (deliveries taking longer or rerouting), and employment levels that can be reliably measured, both prior to, during, and following construction. All non-personalised collected data will be made publicly available for purposes of transparency and scrutiny. Additional qualitative and quantitative data will be collected regularly through voluntary reporting of a sample group of area businesses that are directly impacted by construction for the purposes of confirming the quantitative data and qualifying when there is a need for further mitigation responses to ensure continued business operation.**
- 2. A Business Claims and Compensation process and protocol (online based) for financial rolling claims (e.g. monthly) will be put in place, prior to the start of construction and be made accessible to business that will be impacted by foot traffic reductions, noise, vibration and outdoor dining impacts among other construction-related impacts.**
- 3. Financial support (e.g. grants) for BIAs will be put in place prior to the start of construction to enable for supportive programming within the overall BIA, based on locally determined priorities and needs. These programmes will be active and in place for the start of construction. This direct funding will be made available to affected BIAs for area-specific mitigation projects during construction at the discretion of the BIA, such as studies, area events and marketing programs, BIA-deployed services such as additional cleaning or landscaping, and business advisory services such as Digital Main Street.**
- 4. Existing streetscape enhancements implemented by the BIA will be inventoried and maintained or reinstalled following construction.**
- 5. Coordination of enhanced cleaning of the construction site and a broad radius around it will be provided on an ongoing basis through the contractor to ensure a consistent level of cleanliness can be achieved without any work zone conflicts. The area will be maintained to a level that goes beyond city standards, and be inclusive of property such as business facades, BIA streetscape assets, and POPs. Cleaning activities should include stray garbage collection, garbage bin collection, dust remediation and pressure washing, snow removal, graffiti removal and coverup, poster**

and sticker removal, maintenance of protected trees and planting zones, and the provision of window washing.

SIDEWALK CLOSURES AND PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT: Metrolinx is proposing sidewalk closures of one side of the Queen Street East at a time, at times for four months at a time, as well as full sidewalk closures of both sides of the street that will see pedestrians diverted over five blocks away from the Ontario Line site. The sidewalks, especially on the north side of Queen Street East are critical to the flow of foot traffic supporting the vast majority of local businesses in Riverside. The proposed closures of the sidewalk will disrupt foot traffic to our over 100 small businesses within the Riverside BIA on Queen Street East from neighbouring areas and effectively divide neighbourhoods. Diverting foot traffic in this way will shut off businesses from their revenue sources for months at a time, leading to devastating losses. Additionally, Metrolinx notes after utility relocation and bridge support demolition work completion, a temporary protected and covered pedestrian walkway will be maintained on both sides of Queen Street East. To ensure safety of pedestrians, Metrolinx will keep the temporary walkways free of any debris, loose material, snow and ice and will ensure proper work zone set-up with adequate advisory signage.

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. Sidewalk closures will be minimized, especially to the north side of Queen Street East, and where this is not possible, businesses will be directly compensated for their lost revenue.**
- 2. Pedestrian walkways that are put into place by Metrolinx should be well lit and will include attractive features such as public art, as required with construction hoarding by the City for other projects.**
- 3. Reasonable loading zones for business operations will be created in cases where businesses only have front door access or their current back or side access will be impacted. If this cannot be accommodated, Metrolinx will cover costs for safe courier services to businesses with only front door access from a determined delivery hub.**
- 4. A plan for delivery hours will be developed in consultation with local businesses and BIAs to ensure deliveries keep moving throughout construction.**

ROAD CLOSURES: Metrolinx states they will require up to 10 short-term weekend full road closures to facilitate bridge deck work to take place between 8 p.m. on Fridays and 6 a.m. on Mondays. Vehicular traffic will be diverted to alternative parallel routes during these road closures. Based on the latest schedule provided by Metrolinx, up to 10 full closures will be spread throughout the construction with two full road closures scheduled in July-August 2023, October 2023, May-June 2024, September-October 2024, April-June 2025 and “During the short-term full road closures, pedestrians will be directed to detour around the closure via Broadview Avenue, Eastern Avenue, and McGee Street. Advanced advisory signage will be strategically installed to inform pedestrians of the temporary closure”. Metrolinx is additionally asking the City for the ability to have road closures for a period up to and including 365

consecutive days until December 26, 2026, and exemption from having to notify and report to the local Ward Councillor about such closures.

Given the context of Queen Street, we feel this blanket authority to close roads is completely inappropriate to local businesses and residents, and undemocratic. We are concerned about weekend closures of Queen Street East and have previously requested that if closures must happen, they be over Mondays-Tuesdays to produce the least impact to businesses along Queen Street East. Now, we are seeing Metrolinx will be telling pedestrians to completely avoid several blocks of local businesses over up to 10 full weekends - this is completely unacceptable and will devastate our area to a level not seen through the pandemic. We are extremely concerned with the request by Metrolinx to provide this level of blanket permission for road closures and we are in complete opposition to the proposed closures, unless there is significant and direct compensation to local businesses and the BIA throughout the periods of all closures.

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. Full road closures will be limited to Mondays and Tuesdays to minimize impacts to business operations. Where this is not possible, businesses will be directly compensated for their lost revenue.**
- 2. Metrolinx will put robust supports and programming in place in collaboration with the City and local BIAs during every road closure period to incentivize the public and its own employees and contractors to frequent local businesses, create an inviting environment and promote business traffic.**
- 3. Signage will encourage everyone to walk, cycle, use public transit or find other means to shop, eat and use services at Queen Street East businesses throughout periods of road closures.**

PUBLIC PARKING: Metrolinx's report states that up to eight public parking spaces will be removed during the construction period. Public parking loss during construction is an important concern for the BIA as customers, deliveries, staff, rely on an adequate supply in the area. It also states Metrolinx is currently exploring temporary accommodation of lost on-street permit parking spaces at 8-10 De Grassi Street.

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. A comprehensive parking and business delivery and loading plan will be developed in tandem with the construction staging plan to ensure that parking for contractors, subcontractors, and all other construction-related vehicles is minimized at the construction site and surrounding areas to maximize parking availability and delivery access for area businesses and employees. Parking lost will be replaced nearby the site (e.g. 8-10 De Grassi Street lot).**

COORDINATION WITH OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS: Metrolinx’s report states “... *work will be coordinated with other TTC and City capital works including track replacement, water main replacement, and short-term full road closures. TTC and Metrolinx will coordinate on providing the bus bridging and informing the traveling public in advance...Metrolinx will work with City staff, including the Transit Expansion and Economic Development and Culture Divisions to monitor impacts to local businesses. However, Metrolinx has confirmed that it will maintain all business and property accesses during the bridge works.*” Given Metrolinx and the City are planning to double or triple up their projects to happen in parallel and/or in tandem, this further emphasizes the need for robust supports for local businesses and the BIA to keep the area in business throughout and beyond construction. There is also the importance of coordinating between different authorities in terms of signage to avoid duplication and triplication of construction signage, and to ensure that communications send the message of ‘Open For Business’.

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. The coordination of the Ontario Line with other TTC and City capital works will have the objective to promote the area as being ‘Open for Business’. This lens will be applied and implemented through a combination of supportive communications and signage, business and BIA financial supports, and on-the-ground and digital marketing supports.**
- 2. Construction communications will be put out jointly between agencies to ensure a bigger picture view and understanding is being fostered among local businesses, BIAs and residents.**
- 3. Local businesses and BIAs will have opportunities to provide meaningful input to the joint discussions and decisions on the capital projects affecting their area.**

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE WITH PERMIT REQUIREMENTS: The report states Metrolinx and their contractors will need to comply with “Permit Requirements In accordance with the Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use Of”. We would like to know who is monitoring and ensuring that these permit requirements are met throughout the construction period? Who is accountable for ensuring the permit requirements are met and who can be contacted to correct the issues that come up in a timely manner? What is considered the work zone along Queen Street East in terms of cleanliness and how with dust and debris migration be mitigated?

What we need to see in the Report:

- 1. Monthly or frequent third-party produced “report cards” with how Metrolinx’s compliance is against the permit requirements will be provided publicly.**

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSTRUCTION LIAISON: We are well-aware Metrolinx has been directed to fund a City staff position of a Project Manager – BIA Field Ambassador and this staff

person will be responsible for working with local BIAs to communicate and address business related concerns associated with Metrolinx construction projects. We have been awaiting this position to be filled and this support to be initiated for over one year now and are now advocating for our BIA and businesses in absence of this support. However, this position should not preclude BIA involvement in the planned Construction Liaison Committee for our area, and the need for direct financial and other supports from Metrolinx to BIAs and local businesses to help them develop community-oriented communication materials and programmes to promote their area as being 'Open for Business' throughout the construction period.

What we need to see in the Report:

1. BIAs will be invited to and included in Construction Liaison Committees
2. In advance of construction, a marketing plan will be developed by the constructor in consultation with affected BIAs that is tiered to match each phase of construction and will include highly visible strategies for temporary wayfinding signage, including transit route detours and parking locations, and promotion of continued business operation through the construction area both on-street and online to ensure the area is promoted as 'Open for Business'. Additionally, funds will be provided to affected Business Improvement Areas (BIA) to allow them to develop custom marketing materials that focus on each area's unique attributes and needs.

In summary, the Riverside BIA is requesting that all TMP reports and documentation properly reflect, measure impacts, mitigate, plan for, and fully take into account the business districts that the Ontario Line will be embedded within, including Riverside BIA. The TMP must be looked at and amended with the lens of supporting our area as being 'Open for Business' throughout the construction period. **We also reiterate our previous requests and expectation that a formal support agreement will be formed with our BIA similar or better than what was done with BIAs in projects like the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and per points in this letter, prior to the start of construction.**

Please contact us directly at 416-466-8167 or office@riverside-to.com should you require further information, and we look forward to working together to ensure this project is implemented successfully while keeping Queen Street East 'Open for Business'.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lay
Executive Director, Riverside BIA

On behalf of the Riverside BIA Board of Management:

Mitch Korman, Co-Chair, (Owner, Korman & Co)
Rosie Jeffares-Levitt, Co-Chair (Owner, Quince Flowers)
Jamie Zeldin, Treasurer (Hullmark)
David Watson, (Owner, Eastbound Brewing Co)
Athena Ellinas Towers, (Owner, The Opera House)
Diana Sideris, (Owner, Tabule Middle Eastern Cuisine)
Allison Griffin, (Owner of Hill Studio)
Rohit Wadhawan, (Owner, Indian Spice Room)

Adrienne McRuvie, (Owner, Oma Chiropractic and Wellness)
Natasha Varjacic, (Owner, Nell & Natasha's Real Estate Homeward)
Councillor Paula Fletcher, (Ward 14-Toronto Danforth)

c.

- ontarioline@metrolinx.com
- jkiru@toronto-bia.com (Executive Director, TABIA)
- Julie.Dabrusin@parl.gc.ca (MP, Toronto-Danforth)
- tabunsp-co@ndp.on.ca (MPP Toronto-Danforth)
- councillor_bailao@toronto.ca (Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ward 9)
- michael.giles@toronto.ca (Chief of Staff for Councillor Ward 9)
- councillor_mihevc10@toronto.ca (Councillor Ward 10)
- vienna.o'shea2@toronto.ca (Constituency Assistant Ward 10)
- councillor_thompson@toronto.ca (Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ward 22, Chair of Toronto's Economic and Community Development Committee)
- councillor_minnan-wong@toronto.ca (Deputy Mayor, Councillor, Ward 16)
- councillor_bradford@toronto.ca (Councillor, Ward 19)
- cheryl.blackman@toronto.ca (General Manager of Economic Development & Culture)
- david.hessels@toronto.ca (City BIA Office Manager)
- Sandi.Koitsis-Zigomanis@toronto.ca (City BIA Office, Economic Partnership Advisor)
- ned.sabev@toronto.ca (City BIA Office, Economic Partnership Advisor)
- ron.nash@toronto.ca (City BIA Office, Project Manager)
- mike.tanner@toronto.ca (Toronto Music Advisory Council)
- alok.sharma@toronto.ca (Tourism Manager for Economic Development & Culture)
- bobby.donches@toronto.ca (Film Manager)
- queenstreetto@gmail.com (Queen West BIA)
- leslievillebia@gmail.com (Leslieville BIA)