

Geary Avenue Mobility and Public Realm Strategy Update

Date: January 28, 2022

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Planning and Capital Program, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 9, Davenport

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision, provided that it is not amended such that it varies with City Policy or by-laws.

The Geary Works Planning Study, a comprehensive study and community vision for Geary Avenue, included a Mobility and Public Realm Strategy and provided ten (10) strategic directions for the right-of-way and streetscape on Geary Avenue. This report contains a status update on all ten strategic directions.

This report also recommends the authorization of all-way compulsory stop controls at the intersections of: Salem Avenue North and Geary Avenue, Westmoreland Avenue North and Geary Avenue, Delaware Avenue North and Geary Avenue, and Somerset Avenue and Geary Avenue to take effect at the time of opening the new Geary Avenue Park segment of the Green Line. Warrant criteria were not met based on current traffic conditions. Future conditions anticipated to result from the construction of the new park include changing traffic patterns and increased presence of vulnerable road users accessing the park at these intersections. Transportation Services recommends these stop controls be introduced at that time to promote driver awareness of increased pedestrian and cyclist traffic associated with the new park, and to achieve efficiencies in the design and delivery of the new road signage as an integrated part of the park construction project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director, Planning and Capital Program, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize an all-way compulsory stop control at the intersection of Geary Avenue and Salem Avenue North to take effect following the completion of construction of the Geary Avenue extension of the Green Line

2. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize an all-way compulsory stop control at the intersection of Geary Avenue and Westmoreland Avenue North to take effect following the completion of construction of the Geary Avenue extension of the Green Line

3. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize an all-way compulsory stop control at the intersection of Geary Avenue and Delaware Avenue North to take effect following the completion of construction of the Geary Avenue extension of the Green Line

4. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize an all-way compulsory stop control at the intersection of Geary Avenue and Somerset Avenue to take effect following the completion of construction of the Geary Avenue extension of the Green Line

FINANCIAL IMPACT

All costs associated with the necessary signage and pavement marking installation will be met from the Transportation Services Operating Budget in the year of construction.

DECISION HISTORY

On July 14, 2021 City Council adopted Item PH24.1 (Geary Works Planning Study and City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment - Final Report), directing the General Manager, Transportation Services to:

1. Develop a Parking Management Plan for Geary Avenue, in consultation with businesses, nearby residents and other parking users, to address competing demands on limited space from employees, shipping, receiving, customers, visitors and local residents.

2. Report to Toronto and East York Community Council with recommendations concerning all-way stop sign controls at intersections along the frontage of existing and planned segments of the Geary Avenue Parkette component of the Green Line (i.e. intersections of Geary Avenue and Somerset Avenue, Delaware Avenue, and Westmoreland Avenue) and any related measures to improve safety and comfort of park access for area residents and other park users.

3. Provide a report to the Toronto and East York Community Council in the first quarter of 2022 which provides a comprehensive summary of actions taken and timeline for further actions planned to advance the Geary Works - Mobility and Public Realm Strategy, Attachment 9 to the report (May 6, 2021) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture.

The City Council decision can be found at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.PH24.1>

On September 30, October 1 and 2, 2020 City Council adopted item TE18.66 (Proposed Installation of Traffic Control Signals - Dufferin Street and Geary Avenue) authorizing the installation of traffic control signals at the intersection of Dufferin Street and Geary Avenue.

The City Council decision can be found at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.TE18.66>

COMMENTS

The Geary Works Planning Study identified ten (10) strategic directions in the Mobility and Public Realm Strategy:

1. Develop parking management plan
2. Consider pay-and-display parking
3. Introduce traffic calming measures
4. Improve sidewalk conditions
5. Improve intersection conditions
6. Facilitate sidewalk cafes
7. Provide bicycle-supportive infrastructure
8. Facilitate new and improved street art, planting and surface treatments
9. Improve underpass experience
10. Expand boulevard open spaces

This report contains a status update on all ten strategic directions.

Street Characteristics in Study Area

Geary Avenue is a 1.2-kilometre-long street that runs east-west between Ossington Avenue and a dead-end west of Lightbourn Avenue. Geary Avenue between Dufferin Street and Dovercourt Road is characterized by commercial activity and is classified as a collector road. The remaining sections to the east and west include a higher concentration of residential activity and are classified as local roads. Sidewalks are available on both sides of Geary Avenue between Ossington Avenue and Dufferin Avenue, and only on the north side of the road between Dufferin and the dead-end west of Lightbourn Avenue. Sidewalk widths were built to legacy standards, and range from 1 to 2.1 metres. Sidewalks along some segments of road fall below the current standard minimum width of 1.5 metres and will be remediated when opportunities arise through road reconstruction, park construction or redevelopment. The road width ranges from 9 to 10 metres, which can accommodate two-way traffic and dedicated curbside parking where current lane width guidelines are applied. Permit parking is available for overnight parking and daytime parking is free for one hour. Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) service is not routed along Geary Avenue; there are bus routes on both intersecting arterial streets: Dufferin Street and Ossington Avenue. Bike corrals and post-and-rings offer bicycle parking along the corridor, and a Bike Share Toronto station is located in the Bartlett Parkette.

Strategic Directions 1 and 2: Develop Parking Management Plan and Consider Pay-and-Display Parking

Transportation Services is working with local businesses, nearby residents and other parking users to address competing demands for curbside space. Preliminary engagement has highlighted that curbside space is used for a variety of activities including shipping, receiving, pick-up, drop-off, cafes, placemaking, and bicycle and car parking. The intended Parking Management Plan will become a Parking and Curbside Management Plan that provides strategies and tools to effectively manage curbside space in a way that supports mobility and access for people and goods, including but not limited to parking.

Geary Avenue is a two-way road with one travel lane in each direction. It allows free, one-hour, daytime parking and permitted overnight parking. Parking is located on the south side of the roadway from Ossington Avenue to east of Salem Avenue North, and Dufferin Street to the dead-end west of Lightbourn Avenue. Parking is located on the north side of the roadway from west of Salem Avenue North to Dufferin Street. Geary Avenue has a significant number of boulevard spaces along the frontages of buildings as the right-of-way extends 3 to 6 metres from the back of the sidewalk. The most common uses of these boulevard spaces is commercial boulevard parking, and shipping and receiving activities. Some businesses have converted these spaces to patios or seating areas.

Geary Avenue's Parking and Curbside Management Plan will provide a shared understanding of the curbside demands on a block-by-block scale. Site specific issues, high priority uses and opportunities to encourage high turnover rates will inform potential changes to by-laws to rebalance curbside space and better meet community needs. It will consider both curbside space in the roadway, and off-street boulevard space along the Geary Avenue corridor. The Parking and Curbside Management Plan aims to meet stakeholder needs for various curbside functions while respecting corridor type and alignment with existing City plans and policies.

Stakeholder surveys are being used to study the existing curbside and boulevard uses and clarify the unmet needs. Census-style surveys of local businesses are being taken to deepen the understanding of localized demands and challenges. An online survey of nearby residents and other parking users will be completed to gather feedback from less frequent curbside users. The results of these surveys will be considered in the review of parking regulations and boulevard parking permits. Survey activities will be completed by Spring 2022.

The suitability of pay-and-display parking along Geary Avenue will be considered in the Curbside and Parking Management Plan. Surveys will ask stakeholders about the perceived impacts (positive and negative) of pay-and-display parking. Preliminary discussions with the Toronto Parking Authority have confirmed that paid parking is operationally viable along Geary Avenue.

Strategic Direction 3: Introduce Traffic Calming Interventions

Residents near Geary Avenue have expressed concerns with speeding and driver inattention. Traffic calming measures could be used to improve motorist behaviours and encourage compliance with regulatory speed limits. Traffic calming can also positively impact safety and comfort levels of vulnerable road users.

The [Geary Avenue Park Expansion project](#) will add a new neighbourhood public space and community destination to the Geary Avenue corridor, growing the existing park and linking it to the Bartlett Parkette at Salem Avenue. This proposal will transform segments of the hydro corridor running parallel to Geary Avenue between Delaware Avenue and Westmoreland Avenue into new park space. This park is the first of several planned projects that will create [The Green Line](#), a proposed new linear park system extending five kilometres from Wiltshire Avenue and St. Clair Avenue West to Davenport Road and Macpherson Avenue.

The Green Line is anticipated to be a community destination that encourages active modes of travel. The [Green Line Implementation Report](#) summarized the feedback that was collected through the public and stakeholder consultation process. Two common transportation themes were identified: making improvements to pedestrian safety and connectivity and connecting the Green Line to other active transportation routes and park systems. The upcoming construction along the Geary Avenue corridor provides an opportunity to make streetscape improvements adjacent to the new park space. Traffic calming improvements are being added to design along the park frontage to the greatest extent feasible in response to safety and access concerns that were raised through the Green Line and Geary Works efforts.

Delivery of traffic calming measures will be coordinated as part of the Green Line implementation project. Transportation Services is coordinating with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation division to design traffic calming features such as curb extensions as part of the park redesign. Curb alterations are being considered at four (4) locations along Geary Avenue: Salem Avenue North, Westmoreland Avenue North, Delaware Avenue North and Somerset Avenue North. These four (4) locations are intersections and access points that provide a north/south crossing between the new park space and the residential neighbourhood. Curb extensions would narrow the roadway and encourage slower moving vehicular traffic. Installing them at intersections will reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians, increase pedestrian visibility and prevent parking close to the intersection. In addition to curb alterations, this report is recommending the installation of new all-way stop controls and corresponding pavement markings (see "Improve Intersection Improvements" section).

As noted on page 101 of the Geary Works Planning Study, speed humps are not recommended on Geary Avenue due to high truck volumes, which typically cause excessive loud noise as well as wear-and-tear to the road and the vehicle when trucks pass over the speed humps.

Strategic Direction 4: Improve Sidewalk Conditions

The majority of Geary Avenue has sidewalk coverage on both or one side of the roadway. Sidewalk widths range from 1 to 2.1 metres. Sidewalks along some segments

of road fall below the current standard minimum width of 1.5 metres and will be remediated when opportunities arise through road reconstruction, park construction or redevelopment. Geary Avenue is not programmed for an end-to-end comprehensive road renewal project within the City's foreseeable capital planning horizon.

Opportunities to widen the sidewalk and improve the pedestrian experience are currently being pursued as part of the Green Line implementation discussed above. Sidewalks will be widened along the park face wherever possible. A notable exception is the area where mature trees will be retained as part of the streetscape. Clearing obstructions to the pedestrian clearway and improving the public realm experience will help achieve the Green Line guiding principle to improve walkability. For example, the feasibility of relocating public realm elements like TO Hydro Guy wires, bicycle racks, and garbage receptacles is part of the on-going design work.

Vehicles parking in permitted boulevard locations must drive over the sidewalk to access parking spaces. As part of the Parking and Curbside Management Plan, Transportation Services will survey businesses about the feasibility of retiring Commercial Boulevard Parking (CBP) permits (on a volunteer basis) and repurposing the boulevard to accommodate other uses. Repurposing boulevard spaces that were previously used for parking would allow for the removal of curb-cuts. This would reduce the number of conflict points where vehicles cross the sidewalk and provide an opportunity to level the sidewalk.

Strategic Direction 5: Improve Intersection Conditions

Introducing traffic controls can provide clarity on expected road user behaviour and consequently improve safety for all road users. Through community consultation activities facilitated through the Geary Works Planning study, concerns were raised about the major intersections on Geary Avenue at Dufferin Street and Ossington Avenue, as well as the minor intersections along the frontage of the existing and planned park space.

In 2020, City Council authorized the installation of traffic control signals at the intersection of Dufferin Avenue and Geary Avenue. The installation of the signals will improve safety by establishing a dedicated pedestrian crossing across Dufferin Street and slightly realigning the vehicle approach on the east and west sides to achieve improved sight lines through a limited reduction of the offset in the intersection. The installation of the traffic control signals is scheduled for Q2 2022, subject to the completion of construction activities along Dufferin Avenue.

Through the Geary Works Planning Study public consultation process, suggestions were received to implement all-way stop controls at all intersections along Geary Avenue between Ossington Avenue and Bartlett Avenue North.

Transportation Services analyzed the request for all-way stop controls at the four (4) stop controlled intersections along the frontage of existing and planned park space on Geary Avenue: Salem Avenue North, Westmoreland Avenue North, Delaware Avenue North, and Somerset Avenue. The warrant analysis of all-way stop controls can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: All-way stop control warrant analysis

Warrant Criteria	A: Collision History	B-1A: Total Volume	B-1B: Crossing Volume	B-2: Volume Split	Warrant Met?
<i>Warrant Requirement for Local Road</i>	<i>More than 2 collisions per year</i>	<i>More than 250 vehicles</i>	<i>More than 100 units</i>	<i>Less than 70 percent / 30 percent split</i>	<i>(A or B-1A or B-1B) and B-2</i>
Delaware Ave	0.33	267	23	92/8	Not met
Somerset Ave	0	266	12	95/5	Not met
<i>Warrant Requirement for Collector Road</i>	<i>More than 2 collisions per year</i>	<i>More than 375 vehicles</i>	<i>More than 150 units</i>	<i>Less than 70 percent / 30 percent split</i>	<i>(A or B-1A or B-1B) and B-2</i>
Salem Ave	1	483	60	88/12	Not met
Westmoreland Ave	0.33	478	10	98/2	Not met

To summarize, the all-way stop controls are not currently warranted at any of the four (4) intersections along Geary Avenue. The all-way stop control warrant criteria considers several technical indicators: collision history (A), total vehicle volume (B-1A), crossing volume (B1-1), and volume split (B-2). To meet the technical warrant for an all-way stop control, an intersection must meet the volume split requirement and any one of the following: collision history, total vehicle volume, or crossing volume. Table 1 shows that some intersections met one of the requirements but none met two, which are required for the installation of all-way stop controls on collector and local roads.

The warrant analysis was completed with data that captures existing conditions along Geary Avenue. Traffic patterns in the area and conditions along Geary Avenue are anticipated to change in the short term with the construction of the Green Line and medium term with approved and forecasted development activity in the area. In the short term, the Green Line is expected to increase the presence of vulnerable road users and will encourage higher rates of active transportation. The Green Line expansion on Geary Avenue is expected to become a community destination and an important segment of the five kilometre route, attracting people who are walking, rolling and cycling from the neighbourhood and beyond. Given the changing area conditions and expected presence of vulnerable road users, non-conforming all-way-stop controls are recommended at intersections along the frontage of the proposed park, to be

implemented in coordination with the Green Line park construction, and associated streetscape improvements.

All-way stop controls along the frontage of existing and proposed Green Line park would serve their intended function as traffic control or access management tools that assign the right-of-way among the various road users. They would provide more convenient and safe north/south crossing opportunities for vulnerable road users traveling to and from the park.

Strategic Direction 6: Facilitate Sidewalk Cafes

In November 2021 City Council endorsed the recommendations of the [CafeTO 2022 and Beyond staff report \(Item 2021.EX27.10\)](#), making CaféTO a permanent City program. The CafeTO program will continue to facilitate requests for seasonal right-of-way occupation permits for the purpose of accommodating customers of adjacent businesses. Businesses are encouraged to review eligibility criteria for CaféTO and consider applying if it meets their needs.

As part of the Parking and Curbside Management Plan survey, businesses will be asked about their needs for boulevard parking. Businesses who have low demand for boulevard parking can volunteer to have their CBP permit revoked. Boulevard spaces may be eligible for Frontage Cafes as part of the [Sidewalk Café Permit](#) program. Permit fees for 2022 have been waved to continue emergency support for restaurants and bars.

Strategic Direction 7: Provide Bicycle-Supportive Infrastructure

The Bartlett Avenue / Havelock Street / Gladstone Avenue bikeway is a planned cycling project that will provide a north/south connection from Davenport Road to Peel Avenue. This neighbourhood route was included in the [2021 Cycling Network Plan Update](#), adopted by City Council in December 2021. It will be delivered as part of the near-term implementation program (2022 – 2024), targeting 2022 installation.

Bicycle parking and bike share infrastructure on Geary Avenue are concentrated between Dovercourt Road and Bartlett Avenue North. Post-and-rings and one (1) high capacity bike corral are available for public use. The bike share station at Bartlett Parkette saw over 6100 rides in 2021, which represents a 59% increase compared to 2020 when the station was installed. Demand for bicycle parking and bike share infrastructure is anticipated to increase with the delivery of the Bartlett Avenue bikeway and the Geary Avenue Park Expansion. There may be opportunities to increase bike parking and bike share capacity along the corridor as part of these projects and/or the Parking and Curbside Management Plan.

Strategic Direction 8: Facilitate New and Improved Street Art, Planting and Surface Treatments

Geary Avenue is home to three murals that were advanced through the City's StART Support program. The murals located at 76, 225 and 360 Geary Avenue were painted in an effort to beautify walls exposed to city streets and reduce instances of graffiti

vandalism. All existing murals on Geary Avenue will undergo maintenance assessments to evaluate the impacts of vandalism, if any. The maintenance assessment will inform the necessary next steps to refresh the murals.

The Green Line expansion along Geary Avenue provides an opportunity to implement new street art, planting and surface treatments. The Green line implementation plan noted the importance of public art as a way to reinforce the character of the Green Line, support wayfinding and establish visual termini. The plan shows six (6) potential locations along Geary Avenue (between Ossington Avenue and Dufferin Street) for new and improved public art.

The Economic Development and Culture Division is leading City efforts to support the Cultural Sector along Geary Avenue and have been directed to provide a detailed progress update in a separate report. The Transportation Services Division participates in the Geary Avenue Working Group established to advance economic and cultural goals through collaboration between City staff, local businesses and stakeholders. The Working Group has expressed interest in animating the right-of-way. For example, by encouraging temporary and pop-up arts festivals on the weekends by partnering with existing arts organizations. In October 2021, stakeholders organized the [Geary Art Crawl](#) aimed to celebrate art and culture on Geary Avenue. Event organizers, local residents and businesses who are interested in temporarily occupying a City street, sidewalk or boulevard can apply for a [Street Event Permit](#). Street Event Permits give permission to temporarily close a street to vehicular traffic. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the application process for a Street Event Permit and consider applying if it meets their needs.

A steering committee has been established to discuss the possibility of forming a Business Improvement Area (BIA) anchored by Geary Avenue. Further opportunities to animate the streetscape through public art, planting and surface treatments could be pursued through a local BIA.

Strategic Direction 9: Improve Underpass Experience

There are three underpasses that connect Geary Avenue with the city to the south: Ossington Avenue; Dovercourt Road and Dufferin Street. A mural was painted on the Dovercourt Road underpass through the StreetARToronto underpass program; it has since been tagged and significant portions had to be painted over. All three underpasses have been suggested as candidate sites for the StreetARToronto underpass program.

Unique underpass enhancements, such as art installations or signature lighting are among the placemaking initiatives that could be pursued further by a local BIA.

Strategic Direction 10: Expand Boulevard Open Spaces

The Parking and Curbside Management Plan is a critical first step toward realizing the potential of boulevards. It may identify existing boulevards that can be repurposed and used to create open and public spaces by accommodating street furniture or other community features instead of parking.

Realignment of curbs to reallocate right-of-way space to placemaking uses, and raise that space to the level of the sidewalk, requires civil work that is typically bundled with road reconstruction or redevelopment of adjacent property. The City also offers support to BIAs who wish to pursue standalone boulevard placemaking initiatives as a service to their members.

Conclusion

There is array of paths forward in pursuit of the strategic directions identified in the Geary Works Mobility and Public Realm Strategy that are detailed in this report.

There are five main next steps community members can expect to see the Transportation Services Division take:

- The Parking and Curbside Management Plan will be completed and associated recommendations will be reported to TEYCC or the most appropriate Committee of Council.
- Safety features, such a curb bump-outs, will be built into the design and delivery of the Geary Avenue Park Expansion as part of the Green Line project. If the recommendations of this report are endorsed by TEYCC, all-way stop controls will also be built into the design and delivery of the park.
- Full signal controls will be installed at the intersection of Dufferin Street and Geary Avenue upon completion of road construction along that segment of Dufferin Street.
- The Bartlett Avenue / Havelock Street / Gladstone Avenue bikeway will enter into community consultation phase and, subsequently, delivery in the near-term implementation horizon, targeting 2022 installation.
- Underpasses leading to Geary Avenue will be considered as candidate sites for the StreetARToronto underpass mural program. Existing underpass and wall murals supported by the StreetARToronto program will continue to receive maintenance service, as required.

There are three main next steps that community members can take:

- Businesses, nearby residents and frequent visitors can complete the Geary Avenue Parking and Curbside Management Survey. A long-form survey will be sent directly to businesses with addresses on Geary Avenue in the coming month. A short-form survey open to all will be released in early spring with notices posted on the street
- Businesses can familiarize themselves with the [CafeTO Program](#) and [Sidewalk Café Permit program](#) and apply if one or both suits their needs for accommodating customers in the right-of-way

- Businesses, residents and event organizers can familiarize themselves with the [Street Event Permit](#) process and apply for a temporary closure of a City street, sidewalk or boulevard if it suits their event needs
- Prospective members of the potential BIA can engage with the BIA Steering Committee to discuss whether formation of a BIA is suitable for the area needs, and whether suggestions such as laneway animation, public art and other boulevard placemaking initiatives would be a priority for the new organization

Longer term, opportunities for civil work (like road or sidewalk reconstruction) will continue to be sought through road reconstruction, redevelopment projects and other such opportunities to makeover the street.

CONTACT

Michelle Berquist
Manager, Area Transportation Planning (Area 1), Transportation Services
416-338-7139, michelle.berquist@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Ashley Curtis
Director, Planning & Capital Program, Transportation Services

ATTACHMENTS
