

Temporary Street Closures for Just for Laughs Toronto and Elevate Festival

Date: June 13, 2022

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Permits and Enforcement, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 13, Toronto Centre

SUMMARY

This staff report is about a matter that Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision.

Transportation Services is requesting approval to temporarily close Front Street East to vehicular traffic between Yonge Street and Church Street and on Scott Street from Scott Lane to approximately 41 metres north of Front Street East. The temporary closure to vehicular traffic is required to facilitate the Just for Laughs Toronto and Elevate festival events, which takes place from September 18, 2022 to September 26, 2022, inclusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director, Permits and Enforcement, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council authorize the General Manager of Transportation Services to temporarily close Front Street East between Yonge Street and Church Street, and Scott Street from Scott Lane to approximately 41 metres north of Front Street East from September 18, 2022 to September 26, 2022, inclusive to facilitate the Just for Laughs Toronto and Elevate festival events and to amend the necessary traffic regulations; and
2. Toronto and East York Community Council direct Transportation Services to engage with the event organizers of Just for Laughs Toronto and Elevate to make any changes deemed necessary to address traffic congestion, transit service, business, and accessibility issues arising from the event including but not limited to changes to traffic signal timing and advance, detour and road closure signage as part of the traffic management plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to the City associated with the recommendations in this report. The event organizers will be responsible for all costs, including payment of fees to the City for occupancy of the right-of-way.

The temporary removal of approximately 24 pay and display on-street parking spaces would reduce annual revenues generated by the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) on behalf of the City of Toronto by approximately \$8,240.00.

DECISION HISTORY

This report addresses a new initiative.

COMMENTS

The General Manager, Transportation Services requires approval to temporarily close to vehicular traffic any highway or portion of a highway beyond four consecutive days for social, recreational, community, athletic or cinematographic purposes. As this proposed closure exceeds four consecutive days, Toronto and East York Community Council approval is required.

Proposed Street Closures

The event area on Front Street East is located between Yonge Street and Church Street. The event organizer is requesting this area be closed to vehicular traffic to accommodate their programming from Sunday, September 18, 2022 to Monday, September 26, 2022, inclusive.

The event area on Scott Street is located between Scott Lane and a point approximately 41 metres north of Front Street East. The event organizer is requesting this area be closed to vehicular traffic to accommodate their programming from Sunday, September 18, 2022 to Monday, September 26, 2022, inclusive.

Front Street East, between Yonge Street and Church Street has been closed in the past for various festivals and events, including Woofstock and various charitable runs and races. This is a heavily pedestrianized neighbourhood and part of Toronto's historic Old Town neighbourhood that depends economically on tourism and hospitality.

Event Schedule

The purpose of the proposed closure is to facilitate two street festivals which will run back-to-back and utilize a common site plan and temporary installations, minimizing operational requirements and eliminating a take down and set up period between the two events. The Elevate Festival will take place from September 20, 2022 and September 22, 2022, while the Just for Laughs Toronto Festival will take place from September 23, 2022 to September 25, 2022. Regular traffic operations will resume at 6 a.m. on September 26, 2022. Both festivals will be utilizing the adjacent St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts and Meridian Hall for core festival programming. Both festivals will use Front Street East and Scott Street to produce free, fully accessible, public zones with live performances.

Between September 20 and September 22, 2022, Elevate proposes to run a Block Party within the road closure area and Berckzy Park which will be a cornerstone to this year's festival, bringing three evenings of live music to the area and featuring a diverse mix of Canada's top artists. The event will be completely free to the public and serve as an opportunity for Elevate to connect with and give back to the community through music and arts. As part of the transformation of the space, Block Party will also include public art installations in collaboration with BIPOC artists, interactive activities from our partners and food & beverage stations. The event will also be fully accessible and inclusive with a detailed inclusivity, diversity, equity and accessibility pledge to be released soon.

Between September 23 and September 25, 2022, Just for Laughs Toronto proposes to run a street festival within the same footprint area, providing three days of music, stand-up comedy, and other performance art, featuring up-and coming local artists, global headliners, and BIPOC talent. For the first time ever, Just for Laughs Toronto will be collaborating with Pride Toronto and launch its first evening with LGBTQ2+ music and comedy acts. The street festival will be completely free to the public, featuring family-oriented daytime programming suitable to all audiences and incorporating area restaurants and businesses into the operational plan. The event will be fully accessible.

Just for Laughs Toronto

Established in Toronto in 2012, Just for Laughs was previously known as JFL42. The Just for Laughs Toronto festival is already one of the largest comedy festivals in the world with a mandate to celebrate the most hilarious, innovative, riveting, and relevant comedy experiences. Festival growth over the last decade has demonstrated that Canada has a growing appetite for comedy and that Toronto has the potential to become an international comedy capital, celebrating international acts and developing local talent for a global audience.

2022 will be Just for Laughs Toronto's first festival after interruptions associated with COVID-19. Just for Laughs has taken the last two years to plan the festival's next evolution, which prioritizes growth beyond ticketed events and performances to include free and fully accessible public programming.

History of Elevate

The Elevate Technology Festival is a Toronto-based conference whose mission is to unite the world's innovators to solve society's greatest challenges as Canadian leaders of change. Elevate believes that technology holds incredible potential to transform the world for the better. Elevate connects global icons, thought leaders, entrepreneurs, corporate innovators, policymakers and students to help solve complex social problems. Founded in 2017 as a not-for-profit organization, Elevate produced its inaugural tech and innovation festival in under 90 days. Over 95 partners – community, corporate, investors, founders and government – came together to unite the brightest minds around the world looking to build a better future for society.

After a two-year hiatus from an in person Festival - the iconic tech fest is returning with Elevate Festival 2022, which will include opportunities to network, learn, co-create, and celebrate all under one roof. In September, this reimagined festival will bring together the world's most disruptive minds and creative thought leaders to shine a global spotlight on the best-in-show of Canada's innovation ecosystem.

Traffic Study

To support the general operation of the festival, Just for Laughs Toronto appointed IBI Group to conduct a Traffic Study to evaluate potential traffic operation impacts associated with the proposed road closure. As part of the study, weekday morning and afternoon peak periods were reviewed.

Based on the results of this traffic operation analysis, the signalized intersections in the study area are currently operating without any notable capacity constraints. If all current traffic levels were to remain in the area during the road closure, then intersection operations where detours are proposed are anticipated to deteriorate with notable levels of congestion. However, with mitigation measures such as public communication and advance notification of the event times and the associated road closures, then it is expected that less drivers will traverse through the study area unless necessary. With a proportion (i.e., 50%) of traffic avoiding the area, traffic operations and queues at intersections along the detour route are expected to operate within acceptable levels of service.

With the road closure of Front Street East at Yonge Street, it is proposed that all eastbound traffic at this intersection will be detoured south to The Esplanade. It should be noted some motorists may choose to detour to the north and then back on Front Street East to continue eastbound. A signed detour route will be provided.

Overall, the reduced detoured modeling (50% of traffic avoiding the area) it is expected to cause intersections to operate below capacity throughout the duration of the event.

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) operates bus service on Front Street East. The TTC has been consulted and has no concerns regarding the proposal contained in this report. Service re-routing will be arranged for the 9 day closing of Front Street East.

Traffic Mitigation Measures

To ensure lower levels of traffic are in the festival area during the planned road closures, it is suggested that various mitigation measures be implemented, such as advance public notification via the City of Toronto website, social media, etc. The event organizer's traffic control contractor will place advisory and advance warning signage such as variable message boards prior to the festival dates, to inform drivers to avoid Front Street East. The sign selection and placement are done in accordance with Ontario Traffic Manual Book 7 for Temporary Conditions which provides uniform guidelines for traffic control during temporary road closures.

Transportation Services Traffic Management Centre may undertake a number of traffic signal timing and intersection signage modifications in the surrounding area impacted by the closure of Front Street East, between Yonge Street and Church Street for the Elevate and Just for Laughs Toronto festival event in order to improve traffic flow.

City staff will continue to liaise internally and with area stakeholders as required to ensure all of the traffic management measures for this event are carried out in a comprehensive manner.

Construction

From June 2022 to April 2023, Scott Street from the Esplanade to Front Street East will undergo watermain replacement and new sanitary sewer construction as part of contract 21ECS-LU-08TT. This project is part of the Council-approved 2021 Capital Works Program to renew aging infrastructure, improve water distribution and reduce the risk of watermain breaks. As a result of this construction, there may be additional costs to the event organizers to secure the work zones in order to provide a safe passage for pedestrians/cyclists. Staff have informed the event organizer of this requirement.

The TTC track replacement on Wellington Street East from Wellington Street West to Church Street known as contract EDCT-ECS-20-03429 is scheduled to end August 31, 2022. No conflict is expected with the completion of TTC track construction on Wellington Street East.

Consultation and Community Support

Just for Laughs Toronto and Elevate have been in ongoing collaboration with various City divisions over the last year to effectively plan for both festivals and to mitigate impacts. In addition to interdivisional meetings convened by Economic Development and Culture staff, both groups have met with Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Transportation Services, Toronto Police Services, Toronto Fire, and others. Both organizations have met with local community stakeholders and have received preliminary support from the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association, the St. Lawrence Market BIA, and Friends of Berckzy Park. They have also met with the local Councillor's Office and received support for advancing their plans for the festival programs. It is understood by all stakeholder groups that engagement will be ongoing and that additional details will be finalized over the coming months to ensure that

individual businesses and residential buildings are engaged and to ensure that operational issues and community impacts are effectively minimized.

Transportation Services is satisfied that the event organizer has explored all options to minimize the impact of the closure on all road users. City staff will continue to liaise internally and with area stakeholders as required, to ensure all of the traffic management measures for this event are carried out in a comprehensive manner. Upon completion of the event, Transportation Services staff, in consultation with the local Councillor, the event organizers and other stakeholders will evaluate the traffic management plan. Lessons learned will inform the design of traffic management plans for future street event closures.

The Ward Councillor has been advised of the recommendations of this staff report.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

David J. Twaddle, CET
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Site Plan of Temporary Street Closure - Front Street East - Elevate and Just for Laughs Toronto

Attachment 1:

