

Cummer Station - Response to Council Motions

Date: November 21, 2023

To: Executive Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and Executive Director, Transit Expansion

Wards: Ward 18 - Willowdale

SUMMARY

This report responds to a number of motions from City Council regarding a potential future subway station at Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenues (i.e., Cummer Station) as part of the Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE). Originally planned as part of the Province of Ontario's YNSE project, Cummer Station and another station at Royal Orchard Road in the City of Markham were descope by Metrolinx following the completion of their Initial Business Case analysis and prior to the further planning and design of the project. However, Metrolinx later agreed to deliver Royal Orchard Station despite its poorer performance relative to Cummer Station. At present Cummer Station remains out of scope for the YNSE.

City staff were directed through MM11.19 Last Chance to Urge Province to Build Cummer Station for the Future of North York, to prepare a business case for Cummer Station which will form the basis for another request to the Province to include Cummer Station in the YNSE's base scope. As such, City staff have developed the preliminary business case included in Attachment 1 to this report.

EX5.3 Update on Metrolinx Subways Program – Second Quarter 2023 also included motions related to Cummer Station. This report also responds to these motions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, and the Executive Director, Transit Expansion recommend that:

1. City Council forward Attachment 1 of this report (The Case for Cummer Station) to the Province of Ontario and request the Province reconsider funding the delivery of Cummer Station as part of the Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) project.

2. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to engage with the Province to explore how Transit Oriented Communities (TOCs) could be leveraged in the vicinity of Cummer Station as a partial funding tool to offset the capital cost of delivering the station as part of the YNSE and report on the progress of these explorations through the next status report on TOCs, recognizing that the value of TOC contributions as outlined in this report are limited.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

As previously noted in EX5.3, the preliminary estimated total cost of Single Build delivery (i.e., building the full station as part of the YNSE project) for Cummer Station is \$445-470M and \$535M-\$545M for Phased Build delivery (i.e., building part of the station now and completing it later). Under both options, roughly \$70M would be required to add Cummer Station (or protect for Cummer Station in the Phased Build delivery scenario) to the YNSE scope.

Given the inability to secure sufficient funds through proceeds from TOC projects, the lack of City funding availability and the short timeline required for the commitment of funds, City staff do not support assuming responsibility for the costs to deliver Cummer Station.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of October 11 and 12, 2023, City Council approved MM 11.19 Last Chance to Urge Province to Build Cummer Station for the Future of North York, directing staff to prepare a business case for Cummer Station to support a request to the Province to include Cummer Station in the YNSE project.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.MM11.19>

At its meeting of June 14 and 15, 2023, City Council considered EX5.3 Update on Metrolinx Subway Program – Second Quarter 2023, and requested City staff to determine the level of funding that would be generated by Transit Oriented Communities developments around the intersection of Yonge Street and Cummer Avenue to be applied towards the construction costs of Cummer Station; to assess transit required to serve projected growth for the area around the Cummer/Drewry; and to explore costs to install signage along Yonge Street to announce there is no plan or funding to build Cummer Station.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EX5.3>

COMMENTS

Issue Background

The Province's Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE) will extend TTC's Line 1 subway north from Finch Station to a new terminus at High Tech Road in Richmond Hill, with stations serving the City of Toronto and York Region including stations in Vaughan, Markham, and Richmond Hill along the route. The Provincial government uploaded the planning and delivery of the YNSE from the City and TTC to Metrolinx in 2019 as part of its Priority Projects. The initial budget for the YNSE project was set at \$5.6 billion. Updates on the YNSE project are available via Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario websites 1 and 2 (below).

Metrolinx Business Case

Metrolinx released its Initial Business Case (IBC) for the YNSE in March 2021 considering a total of six stations: Cummer, Steeles, Clark, Royal Orchard, Bridge and High Tech. Metrolinx indicated that the available project budget would not be able to deliver all the proposed stations and noted that Cummer Station did not perform as well as some of the other stations. City and TTC staff reviewed this document and provided comment to support the case for a Cummer Station to Metrolinx prior to its publication. Overall, the IBC presented Cummer Station as a marginally performing station relative to others in the project. However, regardless of the City and TTC's comments on the IBC (as noted below), Cummer Station was de-scoped from the project by Metrolinx.

City staff noted three primary concerns with the analysis in the IBC. First, the IBC and its underlying analysis did not fully reflect the scale of development planned and already in the pipeline around Cummer Station. Second, the IBC narrative focused on Cummer Station being within the 800 metres walking shed of Finch Station, while not adequately emphasizing the additional catchment area that including Cummer would provide. Third, the typical business case methodology emphasizes travel time delays to existing customers, which while valid, also means new outlying stations toward the end of the line will perform better. This can be misaligned with regional growth management objectives. The City's core values of advancing the station from a policy and city-building perspective as outlined in the City's Rapid Transit Evaluation Framework are less emphasized in Metrolinx's Business Case framework.

A Case for Cummer Station from the City's Perspective

MM11.19 directed City staff to prepare a business case for Cummer Station to support a

1 <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/yonge-north-subway-extension>

2 <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/en/what-we-do/projectssearch/yonge-north-subway-extension/>

new request for the Province to fund and deliver the station as part of the YNSE project. City staff have assembled a business case for Cummer Station, included as Attachment 1 to this report. This document combines information provided by Metrolinx respecting construction options and high-level cost estimates with the City's development pipeline data and an assessment through the City's Rapid Transit Evaluation Framework (RTEF). Some updated modelling was carried out by City Planning staff with currently available data. The assessment concludes that Cummer Station provides strategic and economic benefits and represents a valued contribution to city building in the Yonge Street North corridor while improving the overall utility of the transit network.

The business case is structured according to the headings of Metrolinx's Business Case guidance, which includes four sections: Strategic Case, Economic Case, Financial Case, and Deliverability & Operations Case. The City's RTEF is integrated primarily within the Strategic Case, with cost and schedule considerations in the Financial Case.

Highlights and summary findings of the business case include:

Strategic Case:

- Cummer Station will attract significant ridership, with station usage forecasting over 23,000 combined boardings and alightings during a typical weekday in 2051. This is similar to the existing daily ridership at stations such as Wilson, Eglinton West, Wellesley, Keele, or Main Street stations (2019 pre-Covid data). AM peak hour projections indicate higher station usage than Metrolinx's projections for neighbourhood stations indicated.
- The Cummer Station area is forecast to meet the population and employment density generally accepted to support higher-order transit, and prescribed by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe for Major Transit Station Areas.
- The land use planning framework in the Official Plan supports the intensification of the area around Cummer Station, with significant land designated Mixed Use Areas.
- Official Plan Amendment 615 recently increased the amount of land designated Mixed Use Areas around Cummer Station, and the Yonge North Secondary Plan provides a framework for developing a node of tall and mid-rise buildings at Yonge and Cummer.
- The Yonge North Secondary Plan seeks to transform the area into a transit-supportive urban environment, including improvements to mobility infrastructure to support walking and cycling within a complete community.
- Significant development activity is already occurring around Cummer Station, with 7,900 residential units and 27,000 metres square of non-residential Gross Floor Area at various stages of the development pipeline across 17 applications.
- The population within 500m of Cummer Station is projected to increase from 4,800 people in 2021 to 13,800 people by 2051, while employment for the same area and

timeframe is projected to increase from 4,500 to 5,700 jobs. The 2051 population and employment density is projected to be 249 people and jobs per hectare.

Economic Case:

- Economic benefits are estimated to be \$135 million (present value of benefits). Cummer Station will provide significant travel time benefits for users of the station, which is the primary economic benefit of the station.
- The net present value (NPV) of adding Cummer Station is estimated to range from -\$340 to -\$360 million for a "Single Build" scenario, and from -\$430 to -\$440 million for a "Phased Build" approach.
- The benefit cost ratio (BCR) is estimated to range between 0.24 and 0.29. A "Single Build" scenario has a higher benefit cost ratio (0.28 to 0.29) than a "Phased Build" scenario (0.24 to 0.25).

Financial Case:

- Capital costs are within the range of \$445-470M upfront, and \$535M-\$545M for Phased Build delivery (2022\$), as previously reported in EX5.3. Both approaches would require \$70 million as part of the Advance Tunnel contract.
- The operating costs for the addition of Cummer Station were estimated to be \$37.2 million (2021\$ present value) in Metrolinx's business case documents.
- There are some capital cost savings associated with including Cummer Station within the scope of the current YNSE project.
- Protecting for a future Cummer Station involves near-term expenditures for station headwalls and a roughed-in station box that amount to more than half the cost of a fully-operational station, without achieving any of the strategic or economic benefits.

Deliverability & Operations Case:

- A "Single Build" approach to constructing Cummer Station is deemed more feasible. Constructing Cummer Station is operationally more challenging through a "Phased Build" approach, primarily because the construction process could significantly disrupt then-operational subway service.
- The "Single Build" approach to building Cummer Station would avoid any future subway disruption associated with the delivery of the station. With the information available at this time, a "Phased Build" approach would likely significantly disrupt subway operations north of Finch Station that would be running when the YNSE was complete and open for service.
- TTC bus service can be optimized with Cummer Station, with two routes currently serving Finch Station modified to connect to Cummer instead.

- Requirements for trains and yard/servicing capacity need further study.

Opportunities for Transit Oriented Communities at Cummer Station

In a letter provided to the City from the Province in February 2022, an offer was made to reinstate Cummer Station as part of the YNSE if the City assumed the full cost. The letter also stated that any proceeds generated by Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) projects at the station site could be used by the City to offset its cost for the station.

The Province's TOC program is limited in scope to properties that are required by Metrolinx to house transit facilities or needed for construction staging. At the intersection of Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue, three of four quadrants are currently developed with small to moderate scale commercial uses while the southeast quadrant hosts the sales pavilion for the Newtonbrook Plaza redevelopment and would become phase three of that project.

Properties on the other three quadrants are generally relatively small with limited opportunities for redevelopment, which likely explains why they persist in their present form despite the high developer interest in the area. Further impacting these properties are the separation distances that would need to be considered from existing development adjacent to the properties fronting the intersection. Neighbouring developments are built close to their property lines, which results in the need for deeper rear setbacks for the properties adjacent to them in order to achieve appropriate building separation, particularly if tower form development is proposed. Finally, properties fronting the intersection may be required to convey land to achieve the Official Plan designated right of way widths for those roads, thus further reducing the available developable area. Taken together these constraints significantly limit the potential for development at Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue.

The City could choose to partner with the Province to consider TOCs at Cummer Station. However, City staff have assessed TOC opportunities in the vicinity of Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue. The bulk of development properties in the area are well into the development process such that they are not available for consideration as TOC sites. Density has already been established and the value capture forgone. The remaining opportunities are limited mostly to properties directly at the station intersection. Ultimately TOC development, if even feasible, is not expected to contribute significant funding to support the delivery of Cummer Station.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the City's priorities for how it invests proceeds from development are not to offset capital project costs but rather to achieve other city building objectives, notably affordable housing. The City would need to depart from its typical approach to development in order to fund Cummer Station from City-initiated development initiatives.

Additionally, under EX5.3, City Council directed City staff to explore federal infrastructure funding opportunities to contribute towards Cummer Station. City staff

have undertaken a review, and at present, City staff are unaware of any federal funding opportunities available to provide funding for the delivery of Cummer Station.

Transit Service in the Absence of Cummer Station

The TTC provides bus service to the Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue area by way of routes 60 Steeles West, 53 Steeles East, 42 Cummer, and 125 Drewry, all of which currently terminate at Finch Station, in addition to the 97 Yonge, 320 Yonge Blue Night service which provide overlay service between Steeles and south of Finch. When the YNSE is completed routes 97 Yonge, 60 Steeles West and 53 Steeles East will terminate at a new bus terminal at the future Steeles station, while Route 320 Yonge Blue Night service will terminate on-street at the Yonge/Steeles intersection. Routes 42 Cummer, 125 Drewry, 97 Yonge and 320 Yonge Blue Night service would still provide service on Yonge Street, through the Cummer/Drewry Avenue intersection.

Transit service to the Newtonbrook area will be assessed over time as development occurs to determine whether frequency of service needs to be adjusted. These assessments are carried out on the basis of ridership demand and crowding levels on routes and by time of day.

If a subway station is delivered at Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue, routes 42 Cummer and 125 Drewry would be rerouted to terminate at a new bus loop in the vicinity of Cummer Station. The 97 Yonge bus route will remain as a supplementary service, along with the 320 Yonge Blue Night service, as it is today. This section was developed with input from the TTC.

Signage Respecting Cummer Station

Staff have investigated the cost of creating and posting signage at development sites in the Yonge Street and Cummer/Drewry Avenue Area to advise potential residents that there may not be a Cummer Station in the vicinity. Notice signs for development proposals as are required to be posted when an application is made, typically cost \$300 - \$400 per sign, plus additional costs for installation. Larger development sites that front onto more than one street often require a sign on each side of the property. The City operates a sign shop that can produce the signs.

The City does not have authority to require developers to provide such signs at their cost and on their property. The creation and posting of the signage would thus need to be done by the City and posted within the right of way outside of private property. Depending on the size and number of signs, the costs for signage will vary. However, no funding has been authorized by City Council. City staff are not recommending the implementation of signage as no Division has been identified to create, post, maintain and ultimately remove such signs.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Cummer Station Business Case