

## **King Street Transit Priority Corridor Update**

**Date:** April 18, 2024

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Transportation Services

**Wards:** 10 - Spadina-Fort York; 13 - Toronto Centre

### **SUMMARY**

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King Street is a significant east-west corridor in the Downtown, serving the largest concentration of jobs in the entire country. King Street is also a key destination for culture, heritage, entertainment, and retail uses, along with significant residential intensification along the King Street Transit Priority Corridor and in the downtown more generally.

The 504 King streetcar is the busiest surface transit route in the city and services the King Street Transit Priority Corridor, between Bathurst Street and Jarvis Street. The Transit Priority Corridor aims to provide customers with improved transit reliability, speed, and capacity by giving priority to streetcars over private vehicles. It also provides customers with a critical transit connection, particularly with significant construction on parallel corridors in the downtown such as Queen Street, with the Ontario Line construction currently underway.

As requested by City Council through Member Motion 12.1 Automated Traffic Enforcement on King Street in November 2023, this report provides an update on a number of matters that Transportation Services, in partnership with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and ongoing support from Toronto Police Service, has been advancing to improve the reliability of the Transit Priority Corridor in the near term, as well as an update on the feasibility of implementing automated traffic enforcement along the Transit Priority Corridor.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. City Council give authority to allow the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus to utilize the King Street Transit Priority Corridor.

2. City Council approve the amendments to City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, associated with the above Recommendation generally as outlined in Attachment 1 to the Report (April 18, 2024) from the General Manager, Transportation Services.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The estimated cost to implement the improvements outlined in this report is \$3,100,000. Funding is available for these capital projects categorized as a service improvement and enhancement in the approved 2024-2033 Capital Budget and Plan for Transportation Services (CTP419-03).

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as contained in the Financial Impact Section.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On November 8, 2023, City Council adopted MM12.1 Automated Traffic Enforcement on King Street, requesting a review and report back in the second quarter of 2024 on a number of matters related to the King Street Transit Priority Corridor.

[Agenda Item History - 2023.MM12.1 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On November 8, 2023, City Council adopted the report IE7.2 The Congestion Management Plan 2023-2026, with amendments. The report noted that Traffic Agents were deployed at a number of intersections on King Street to support transit operations.

[Agenda Item History - 2023.IE7.2 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On April 16, 2019, City Council adopted the report EX4.2 The Future of King Street: Results of the Transit Pilot, with amendments.

[Agenda Item History - 2019.EX4.2 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On July 4, 5, 6 and 7, 2017, City Council adopted the report EX26.1 Proposed King Street Transit Pilot – Bathurst Street to Jarvis Street, with amendments.

[Agenda Item History - 2017.EX26.1 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Background**

The King Street Transit Priority Corridor between Bathurst Street and Jarvis Street aims to prioritize people and transit through improved transit reliability, speed and capacity. On November 12, 2017, the King Street Transit Pilot was launched. The Pilot demonstrated, relatively quickly and cost-effectively, its ability to move people more efficiently on transit without compromising the broader transportation road network. On April 16, 2019, City Council made King Street a permanent Transit Priority Corridor.

## **Updates on Recent and Upcoming Operational Improvements**

Towards the latter part of 2023, TTC raised concerns regarding the operational impacts on streetcars in the Transit Priority Corridor, due to significantly increased traffic volumes, violations on the existing through movement restrictions and increased instances of vehicles blocking intersections, making it impossible for streetcars to pass and proceed through the intersections. Transportation Services undertook immediate measures to improve the operation of the King Street streetcars, including traffic agent deployments, in parallel with Toronto Police enforcement support and traffic signal timing adjustments, to support transit. Medium and longer-term strategies are also underway to further enhance operation, introduce automated enforcement where necessary and to improve safety for all road users on the Transit Priority Corridor, as detailed in the sections below.

### **Traffic Agents Deployment**

Traffic Agents were deployed at King Street and University Avenue, Bay Street, Yonge Street, Church Street and Jarvis Street in November 2023, in response to TTC concerns over observations of vehicles blocking intersections as well as vehicles illegally crossing intersections where prohibited. These observed violations, in combination with increased traffic volumes along the Transit Priority Corridor, resulted in streetcar travel times increasing anywhere from 45 to 65 minutes per trip, in comparison to the average 16 minute travel times experienced prior to the pandemic, in 2018.

In combination with enforcement support from Toronto Police, the Traffic Agents were able to manage traffic and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists navigating the intersections. When Traffic Agents were deployed, streetcar travel times dropped to 17 to 21 minutes across the Transit Priority Corridor. With forthcoming improvements to traffic signals and changes in traffic patterns due to construction closures coming to an end and in other cases starting up, Transportation Services staff will continue to monitor the Transit Priority Corridor and make changes to the locations where Traffic Agents are deployed as required.

### **Recent and Upcoming Traffic Signal Improvements**

In November 2023, Transportation Services adjusted traffic signal timings along the Transit Priority Corridor to favour streetcar operations. The east/west traffic signal green times were increased as well as adjustments to pedestrian signal timings to increase safety for pedestrians along the corridor.

In April 2024, traffic signal modifications were made on King Street at Yonge Street and Church Street to provide greater clarity to motorists on the through-movement restrictions and further improve safety for all road users. Specifically, dedicated transit and bicycle signals were installed, and the traffic signal phasing was adjusted so that vehicles see a solid red indication when transit and bicycles see the green to proceed through the intersection. In addition, there is now a separation between the green right-turn arrow for vehicles and the pedestrian walk phase whereby pedestrians are given priority and separation from right-turning vehicles. The combination of these modifications increases safety for all by mitigating potential conflicts between vehicles and vulnerable road users.

The effectiveness of these improvements is being monitored and, if successful, Transportation Services is proposing to implement similar changes at other locations along the King Street corridor. It is anticipated that these measures, if successful, may also mitigate the need for Traffic Agents at two or more locations.

### **The Enforcement Strategy and Feasibility of Automated Enforcement**

The number of traffic violations along King Street of vehicles either illegally crossing or blocking the intersections escalated in the last few months of 2023, to approximately 110 violations per hour, as measured at King Street and Yonge Street, with a significant increase in traffic violations at other locations along the King Street corridor as well. While Toronto Police has been providing enforcement support as an immediate solution, Transportation Services is actively investigating more sustainable medium and longer-term plans for continued enforcement.

As a medium-term plan, Transportation Services is coordinating with Toronto Police to extend the Traffic Direction pilot program whereby Toronto Police provide supplemental traffic management and enforcement support to the Traffic Agents. Discussions with Toronto Police are underway regarding the source of ongoing funding for the Traffic Direction program, and subject to the outcome of these discussions, Transportation Services may identify this as a funding pressure in a future Operating Budget submission. In addition, the traffic signal modifications on King Street at Church Street and Yonge Street will be expanded to other locations along the King Street corridor. It is important to note that the implementation of these traffic signal modifications lend themselves to the possibility for automated enforcement for red light running.

The longer-term plan entails the deployment of automated enforcement along the King Street corridor. Whereas the City has the legal authority and contracted services in place to implement cameras for red light running, there are still further changes required to the Ontario Highway Traffic Act (HTA) to enable the City the full authority to implement automated enforcement over the bylaw infraction of entering an intersection on a green light and effectively blocking the intersection to opposing traffic. Further, the Provincial legislation would require a change to authorize the City to enact a bylaw that charges the 'owner of the vehicle' rather than the driver of the vehicle against this infraction. This change would be necessary as the technology for block-the-box enforcement reads the license plate, hence only the owner of the vehicle can be charged.

With respect to next steps on the longer-term, automated enforcement solutions, Transportation Services will:

- continue to monitor the effectiveness of the traffic signal modifications to determine to what extent automated enforcement is needed;
- engage the province at the working level to clearly establish what changes need to be made to the HTA and;
- as previously directed by Council, work with Toronto Police on a strategy that would entail pilots and ultimately procurement for automated enforcement of other bylaw infractions, such as blockage of signalized intersections and illegal blockage of bike lanes and dedicated transit lanes.

## **Updates on Near-term Public Realm Improvements**

Transportation Services is working to improve maintenance and implement a number of near-term public realm improvements along the Transit Priority Corridor.

### **Maintenance Improvements**

In July 2023, the TTC and Transportation Services staff executed an inspection blitz along the full length of the Transit Priority Corridor. The blitz identified multiple locations requiring immediate maintenance, including 180 irreparable or missing road tactile mats installed at transit stops along the corridor. Transportation Services staff repaired and replaced all damaged tactile mats and removed or replaced five damaged flexible bollards.

Since January 2024, Transportation Services completed numerous Service Requests along the Transit Priority Corridor including repairing damaged roads, potholes, sidewalks, and cycling infrastructure. As part of the annual Transportation Services Spring Clean-Up program commencing in April, staff will conduct a thorough inspection of the corridor and implement any necessary maintenance to damaged assets that may have been caused by winter maintenance operations. This maintenance work will involve identified repairs to infrastructure (platforms, posts/bollards), pothole repair, expanded street sweeping operations, graffiti removal and pavement marking refreshing.

### **Streetcar Platform Improvements**

Raised modular transit stop platforms were installed on King Street at Portland Street and Peter Street in 2019. The raised transit stop platforms:

- improve safety for cyclists, streetcar riders and drivers;
- improve accessibility by making it easier to board/exit streetcars;
- eliminate drainage/pooling issues in the waiting zone; and
- clearly mark zones for cyclists and pedestrians.

Note that the raised transit stop platform at Peter Street was recently removed due to an adjacent development and will be redeployed in another location.

Most of the remaining transit stops along the Transit Priority Corridor are currently in the curb lane utilizing temporary accessible ramps to connect the sidewalk to the road-level to allow people with disabilities to get on and off the streetcar. These dedicated spaces are delineated with a yellow tactile warning surface indicator strip and provide a dedicated space for waiting customers.

In an effort to improve safety and accessibility along the Transit Priority Corridor, the City has reviewed options to raise the remaining transit stops using modular raised transit platforms in the near-term (2024-2025) prior to major track and roadwork on King Street beyond 2030.

Staff have reviewed the feasibility of implementing modular raised transit platforms at all 20 transit stops along the Transit Priority Corridor at the existing locations in the curb

lanes, and are proceeding to install this year at locations that have minimal conflicts with existing sub-surface utilities. Design work is underway for these transit stops, and a contract is in place for installation of 5 to 7 locations in the fall of 2024.

The remaining locations require time for engineering review and detailed design due to conflicts with utilities located within the roadway. Subject to resolving these issues and consultation with affected utility providers, these will be planned for implementation in 2025.

Staff have also reviewed the existing platforms to identify any deficiencies and any areas that require maintenance such as some of the temporary asphalt ramps. These will be addressed in the interim at locations that are not identified for platform installation in 2024.

### **Mid-Block Improvements**

Additional public realm improvements are being planned to build on the successes of measures used in key locations during the initial King Street Transit Pilot, as well as other opportunities emerging at some mid-block locations along the Transit Priority Corridor.

In some locations, mid-block boulevard curb extensions are planned to enhance the public realm, and in some cases provide opportunities for green infrastructure along the Transit Priority Corridor. Mid-block curb extensions would be implemented in areas that do not interfere with TTC stops, turning lanes or on-street loading areas. Design is planned to be initiated in Fall 2024, with initial installation to begin in 2025.

### **Other Requested Improvements**

#### **Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus Exemption**

General traffic is required to turn right off of King Street at most major intersections, with the exception of streetcars, buses, TTC-operated Wheel-Trans vehicles, and bicycles. A further exemption for licensed taxicabs is provided between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

The Billy Bishop Airport shuttle service currently operates every 15 minutes between the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (located on the mainland in front of the Main Terminal/Passenger Tunnel Access Building) and Union Station (located on the west side of Fairmont Royal York Hotel, at the northeast corner of Front Street and York Street, across the street from Union Station). The current route for the shuttle bus mainly utilizes Queens Quay and York Street.

Given the transit-like operations of the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus, and in order to improve the shuttle service and neighbouring traffic operations, it is recommended to amend the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 950 to allow the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus to utilize the Transit Priority Corridor.

## Next Steps

### Performance Dashboard

An updated performance dashboard about the Transit Priority Corridor is currently in development and will be posted online once completed. It will include data on the performance of streetcars along the Transit Priority Corridor prior to the pandemic, during the pandemic, prior to closing of Queen Street for Ontario Line construction, and following the use of Traffic Agents at key intersections.

### Future Streetscape Improvements

As a longer-term strategy, the existing temporary elements of the Transit Priority Corridor design will be replaced with permanently constructed elements such as bump-outs for transit stops, as well as widened sidewalks and public realm spaces, in coordination with future construction projects. As private redevelopment continues to take place along this section of King Street, staff will explore opportunities to improve the streetscape in coordination with those projects.

Staff will also take into consideration the goals of the TOcore Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan adopted by City Council in May 2018, and will work with the community and interested parties, such as local Business Improvement Areas, in developing a unified streetscape plan that responds to and enhances King Street's distinct character.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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Barbara Gray  
General Manager  
Transportation Services

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Amendments to Traffic and Parking Regulations - Chapter 950



**Attachment 1 - Amendments to Traffic and Parking Regulations - Chapter 950**

City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 950, Traffic and Parking, is amended as follows:

A. By amending Section B.3 in § 950-101 by deleting the phrase "following term" and replacing it with the phrase "following terms" and by inserting in alphabetical order a new definition of "BILLY BISHOP AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS" as follows:

BILLY BISHOP AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS - A shuttle bus clearly identified by markings on both sides as 'Billy Bishop Toronto Airport Shuttle Service' that is actively engaged in the transport of passengers to or from Billy Bishop Airport."

B. To be Rescinded:  
 § 950-1322 Schedule XXIII (Prohibited Turns):

<b>Intersection or Portion of Highway</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Turns Prohibited</b>	<b>Times and/or Days</b>
King Street West and University Avenue	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles and bicycles excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Peter Street	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles and bicycles excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Spadina Avenue	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles and bicycles excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Portland Street	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles and bicycles excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Bathurst Street	Westbound	Left	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles excepted.)

C. To be Inserted:  
 § 950-1322 Schedule XXIII (Prohibited Turns):

<b>Intersection or Portion of Highway</b>	<b>Direction</b>	<b>Turns Prohibited</b>	<b>Times and/or Days</b>
King Street West and University Avenue	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles, bicycles and Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Peter Street	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles, bicycles and Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Spadina Avenue	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles, bicycles and Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Portland Street	Eastbound and Westbound	Through	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles, bicycles and Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus excepted. Taxicabs excepted from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.)
King Street West and Bathurst Street	Westbound	Left	Anytime (T.T.C. vehicles and Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus excepted.)