

The Beltline Gap Connections Project:

Why we are asking for a pause

Submitted by Jeffrey Stutz
on May 22, 2024



The Cedarvale Upper Village Community Group is a group of people who are interested in making our neighbourhood safe, accessible and vibrant. We work collaboratively with city councillors, government agencies and developers to establish and maintain a neighbourhood that is home to first-class transit, vibrant shops and services, beautiful parks, and inviting public spaces. (www.cedarvaleuppervillage.ca)

The Beltline Gap Connections Project

The City's Beltline Connections Project proposes a safe and connected route for people cycling and pedestrians over the Allen Road Expressway closing the gap between the York Beltline Trail and Kay Gardner Beltline Trail.

We support the overarching goals of the project, however:

- Information and notices about this project were given to the community at the end of March 2024. With very little context and information, the community was only provided 3 weeks to give feedback, as the deadline for comments was April 19, 2024.
- Local residents engaged the Cedarvale & Upper Village Community Group (CUVCG), and a virtual meeting was held with the City to ask detailed questions and voice concerns on April 16, 2024.
- After the meeting, residents requested further consultation on this project. The City declined holding further meetings and communicated that the original project will move forward as planned, stating that the next opportunity for public feedback would take place during the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on May 28, 2024.

Our request to the city is, Pause the Beltline Gap Connections Project until:

- (1) A comprehensive, neighbourhood-wide mobility study is completed (which is being done as part of eglintonTOday)**
- (2) The Marlee Avenue Area Study is complete, and its findings analyzed and modelled**
- (3) The Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study is complete, and its findings analyzed and modelled**
- (4) The findings and recommendations of the Allen Greenway Guidebook have been considered**
- (5) The eglintonTOday streetscape design between Marlee and Bathurst is approved**
- (6) Proper public consultation is conducted**
- (7) The alternative solution - Extension of the York Beltline Trail - is fully explored**



COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE BELTLINE GAP CONNECTIONS PROJECT

Our neighbourhood has endured over 12 years of traffic mayhem due to protracted construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

The recently reinstated Eglinton & Allen intersection has only made things worse and has highlighted the City's lack of proper study and planning of our area.

We have read background reports, such as the **Allen Greenway Guidebook**, and know that studies of the area, such as the **Marlee Avenue Area Study** and the **Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study Approach** were endorsed by the City back in 2022 and have not been completed.

Our community has voiced strong concerns about the negative impacts this hurried project may have on our neighbourhood.

Implementing new streetscape programming without proper study will inflict long-term harm to our residents and businesses.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- A. ABSENCE OF DATA AND PROPER STUDY
- B. IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAFFIC & SAFETY
- C. IMPACT OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND INTENSIFICATION NOT CONSIDERED
- D. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC CONSULTATION

COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE BELTLINE GAP CONNECTIONS PROJECT

A) ABSENCE OF DATA AND PROPER STUDY

Mandated City studies have not been considered or completed:

- Marlee Avenue Area Study
- Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study Approach
- Allen Greenway Guidebook

What is the status of these studies?

Quality of the Data and Statistics:

- How were the data and vehicle volumes provided determined? What dates/times were volumes measured?
- Has the City applied a growth factor to the traffic volumes given the development planned for the area?
- Has this modeling been incorporated into the modeling of the larger, more holistic study of Marlee?
- Beltline users have not been surveyed.

Integrated Design with eglintonTOday:

- The Allen & Eglinton intersection is not functional and needs re-configuration.
- The Complete Street between Marlee & Bathurst has is on hold and has not been finalized.
- The City should complete the street programming design between Marlee and Bathurst before installing further infrastructure on Marlee and Roselawn.

A) ABSENCE OF DATA AND PROPER STUDY

The Marlee Avenue Study Area

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.NY30.42>

NY30.42 - Marlee Avenue Area Study City Council Decision

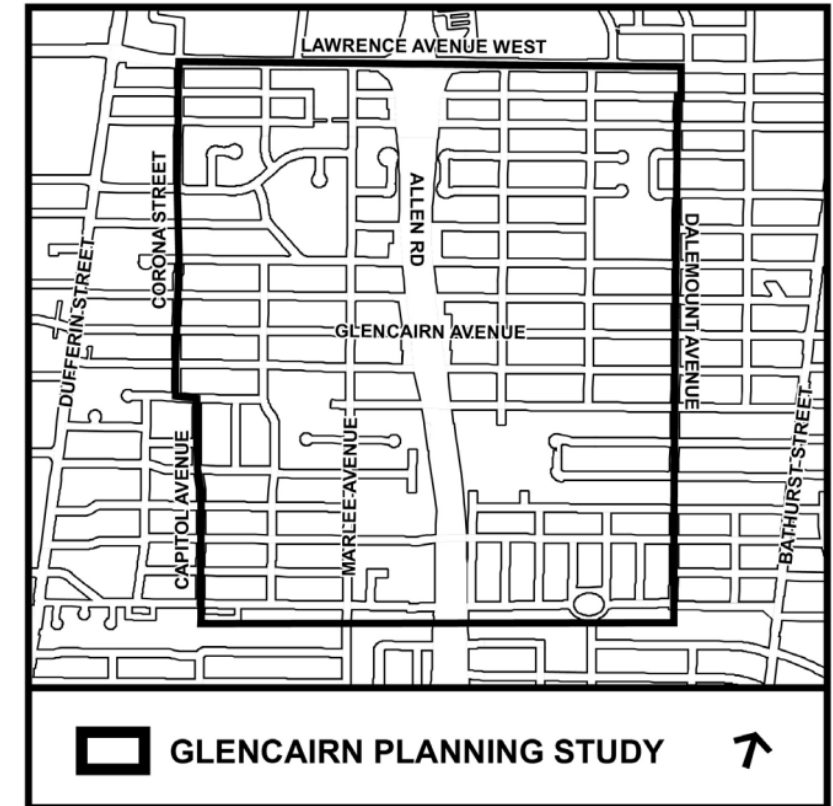
City Council on March 9, 2022, adopted the following:

1. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the General Managers of Transportation Services, Engineering and Construction Services, Toronto Water, and Parks, Forestry and Recreation to prepare a work plan and draft terms of reference for a planning study generally within 800 metres of the Glencairn subway station in support of the City's Municipal Comprehensive Review.
2. City Council direct the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to the North York Community Council on the timing, boundaries, and components of the study in Part 1 above, including but not limited to land use, built form, open space and parks, community facilities, infrastructure, and heritage, by June 2022.

In February 2022, the IEC and City Council adopted IE27.14 which called for a comprehensive traffic study of Marlee to address safety concerns and hypergridlock on Marlee at Lawrence.

What is the status of this study?

Attachment 2: Study Area



A) ABSENCE OF DATA AND PROPER STUDY

REPORT FOR ACTION - Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study Approach, June 6, 2022

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ny/bgrd/backgroundfile-227187.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. North York Community Council direct staff to proceed with engaging a consultant team to undertake the study generally based on the Terms of Reference in Attachment 1 to this report; Staff Report for Action - Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study - Preliminary Report Page 2 of 14
2. North York Community Council direct staff to bring forward an Official Plan Amendment, and supporting reports and guidelines, where applicable, to implement the findings of the Study;
3. North York Community Council direct staff to continue working with applicants on active development applications in the study area in coordination with study; and,
4. North York Community Council request City Planning staff, where a development application noted in Recommendation 3 is appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal, and where City Council directs that staff appear before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal to oppose such development application to inform the City's position with any Study findings at the time of the appeal.

“...it would be appropriate to undertake a local area study to establish a planning framework to guide and manage the long-term growth in the study area. Furthermore, the Major Transit Station Area work undertaken by the City in response to recent provincial directives have identified that **the Glencairn subway station area is in need of a local area study** to respond to such directives.”

“On March 25, 2022, the Planning and Housing Committee ("PHC") received a staff report for 57 PMTSAs, 40 MTSAs and stations requiring further study. **Glencairn, Lawrence West and Eglinton West subway station area lands were identified in this report.**”

REPORT FOR ACTION - Glencairn Subway Station Planning Study Approach, June 6, 2022

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/ny/bgrd/backgroundfile-227187.pdf>

The study will be undertaken in four phases:

- (1) a study kick-off, consultation, and research,
- (2) options development,
- (3) preferred options development and,
- (4) the statutory public process for the resulting draft Official Plan Amendment.

It is anticipated that for each phase of the study, there will be public engagement which may take the form of a community consultation meeting, workshop, charrette or more formal meetings.

A Local Advisory Committee ("LAC") with representatives from various residents associations, landowner representatives, business representatives, community organization representatives, members of the general public, and the development industry, will be established based on a separate terms of reference to be created. The LAC is intended to maintain ongoing communication and feedback from the community and other stakeholders.

Terms of Reference

Study Deliverables Key deliverables expected from the study are as follows:

- Area Profile Report which identifies the existing baseline conditions for the various matters to be considered in the Study;
- A minimum of three Development Scenarios to understand how growth can occur in the Study area;
- A Preferred Option to inform a vision and framework for the Study;
- A Final report to Council with a recommended vision and framework for the Study and related draft Official Plan Amendment to implement same;
- Urban Design Guidelines;
- Mobility Study Report;
- Community Services and Facilities Implementation Strategy; and,
- Infrastructure Implementation Strategy.

The work plan and terms of reference endorsed above encompassed most of Marlee and Roselawn/Elm Ridge. What is the status of this study?

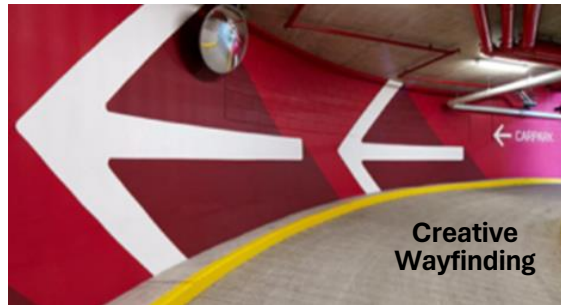
The cycling infrastructure and street design changes proposed in the Beltline Gap Connections Project fall into the study area and should not be undertaken until the holistic study that was approved in 2022 is completed.

A) ABSENCE OF DATA AND PROPER STUDY

The Allen Greenway Guidebook

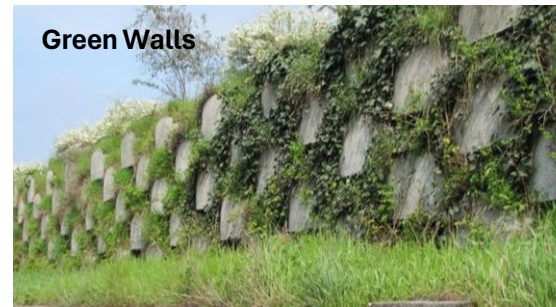
https://ecologicaldesignlab.ca/site/uploads/2020/11/Allen-Greenway-Guidebook_C.-Bucksbaum_Summer-2020_pages-compressed.pdf

The Allen Greenway Guidebook is a fulsome report that was completed for the City of Toronto, City Planning Division, Community Planning – North York in Summer 2020. It provides important and relevant insights relating to the objectives of the City’s Cycling Network Plan, the Beltline Connections Project and the York Beltline Trail Extension.



The Allen Greenway is secured by the Lawrence-Allen Secondary Plan.

To support a cohesive public realm, policy 2.1.9 directs that **Allen Road be integrated to achieve a positive physical and social relationship with surrounding buildings, parks, and open spaces.** Section 4.3 addresses long term objectives for the Allen Road Corridor. Policy 4.3.1 outlines the objectives, which include (4.3.1a) **to provide a direct and continuous north-south pedestrian and cycling route along each side of Allen Road** that is safe, convenient, and integrated with the surrounding pedestrian and cycling network, and (4.3.1e) to improve existing connections and crossings and create additional pedestrian, bicycle, auto, and green connections to and across Allen Road Corridor. P.11



The Allen Greenway Guidebook

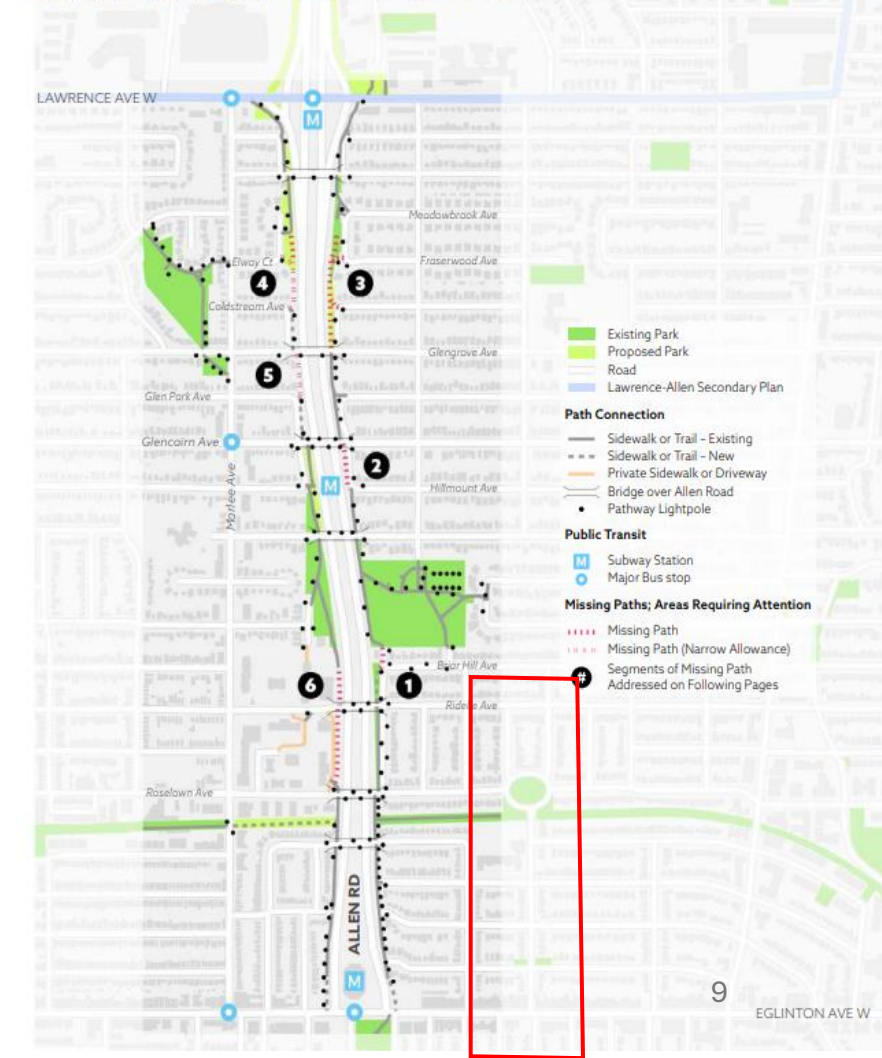
https://ecologicaldesignlab.ca/site/uploads/2020/11/Allen-Greenway-Guidebook_C.-Bucksbaum_Summer-2020_pages-compressed.pdf

“Parks in Ward 8 are mostly small and separated. Some of the area’s larger parks, plus the end point of two east-west linear parks, run along Allen Road, offering the potential for a well-designed linking – both north-south and east-west – of park and open spaces.” P6

There is an opportunity to examine the parks in Ward 8 that abut and link to cycling routes and make beautification and safety enhancements.



Map 16: South Zone Detail: Lightpoles (Caroline Bucksbaum, Summer 2020)



COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE BELTLINE GAP CONNECTIONS PROJECT

B) IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAFFIC & SAFETY



Monday, May 6th 5:30pm.
Traffic backed up from Marlee past Marwood

- *Marlee is a busy street that feeds the Allen Road ramps both at Lawrence Ave and Eglinton Ave.*
- *The Beltline Gap Connections Project aims to narrow streets and remove the left-turn lane at Roselawn & Eglinton.*
- *Elm Ridge/Roselawn is a busy east/west thoroughfare that reaches all the way to Keele, but at the same time passes through sensitive residential neighbourhoods.*
- *Narrowing streets and removing the turning lane could cause further congestion as more construction, deliveries, ubers, etc. will be blocking streets and creating backup on residential streets.*

COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE BELTLINE GAP CONNECTIONS PROJECT

C) IMPACT OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT & INTENSIFICATION NOT CONSIDERED

Marlee is going to see massive intensification and growth due to its proximity to three subway stations (Lawrence, Glencairn and Eglinton West). Today there are almost **2,500 units** proposed or under construction in the area.

New development and construction will inevitably cause more traffic chaos.

The Lawrence Allen Revitalization Plan, the Allen Road Environmental Assessment, the Marlee Avenue Study Area and the Allen Greenway Report all call for proper and detailed study of the Allen Corridor and its surrounding communities.

The absence of proper study now could spell long-term disaster.



836/838 Roselawn, 131 Lyon Court
35 storeys, 472 units, 127 parking spots



155/165 Elm Ridge – The Reena Building
20 storeys, 111 units, 37 parking spots

COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT THE BELTLINE GAP CONNECTIONS PROJECT

D) LACK OF TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC CONSULTATION

March 2024 - Information and notices about this project were given to the community

April 19, 2024 – Deadline for comments and feedback. Very little context and information was provided to the community.

April 16, 2024 - Virtual meeting was held with the City to ask detailed questions and voice concerns

May 3, 2024 - The City provided detailed notes and meeting minutes. City declined holding further meetings and communicated that the original project will move forward as planned, stating that the next opportunity for public feedback would take place during the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on May 28, 2024.

Over the years traffic and safety concerns on Marlee and surrounding streets have been highlighted and brought to the City's attention. In addition, the comprehensive studies mandated by the City for Marlee, Lawrence and Eglinton have not been done.

Hence, we believe that this project has not been subject to the proper due diligence and community engagement required.

WE INVITE THE CITY TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY TO FIND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS AND OVERCOME CHALLENGES

The preferred and safer way to expand cycling and pedestrian networks in the neighbourhood is extending the York Beltline Trail. We are ready to work with the city to overcome the challenges of this alternative:

1. Beltline crossing at Marlee Avenue
2. Connecting north-south paths along the Allen Road are not wide enough
3. The City only owns the land on the surface of the future east-west park between Marlee and Allen Road.



SITE LAYOUT PLAN



EXISTING CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



EXISTING CONDITION



BOLLARD



BENCH

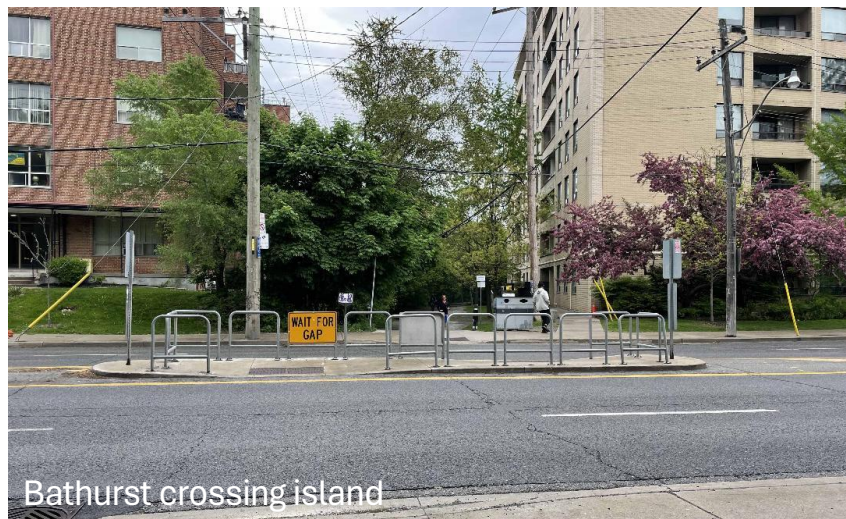
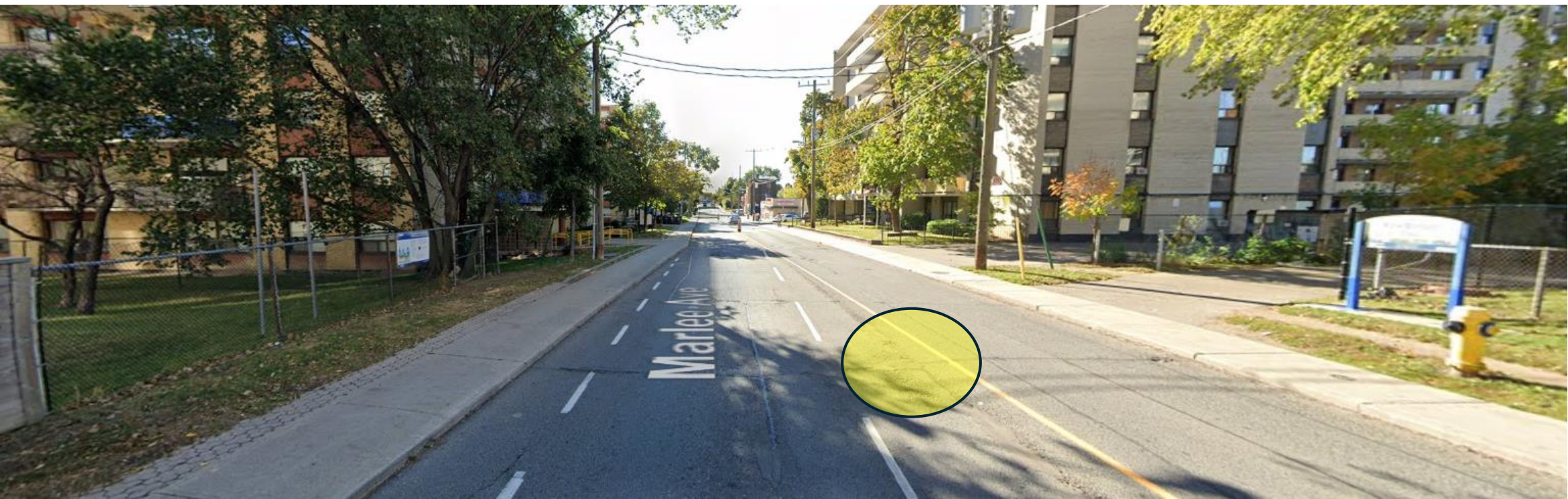


LIMESTONE TRAIL



TRAIL SIGNAGE

Challenge 1: Beltline Crossing at Marlee Avenue



Bathurst crossing island



Avenue Road crosswalk

Explore Beltline Crossing Options:

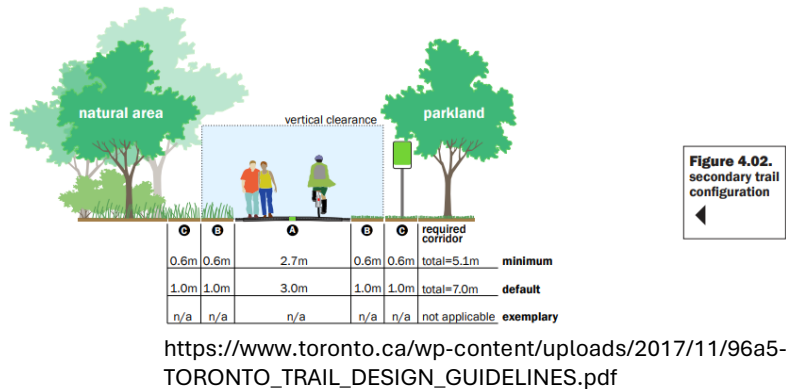
Examine if any other crossing methods that have been implemented at other Beltline crossing points (i.e. Bathurst Street, Avenue Road, Caledonia) are suitable for Marlee .

Challenge 2:

The connecting north-south paths are not wide enough



The paths that run parallel to the Allen, that connect the proposed York Beltline Extension to either the Elm Ridge Bridge or Aldburn Bridge, can be considered **Secondary Trails**, which “connect between destinations within a small geographic area, or act as feeder or tributary routes for larger trails.”

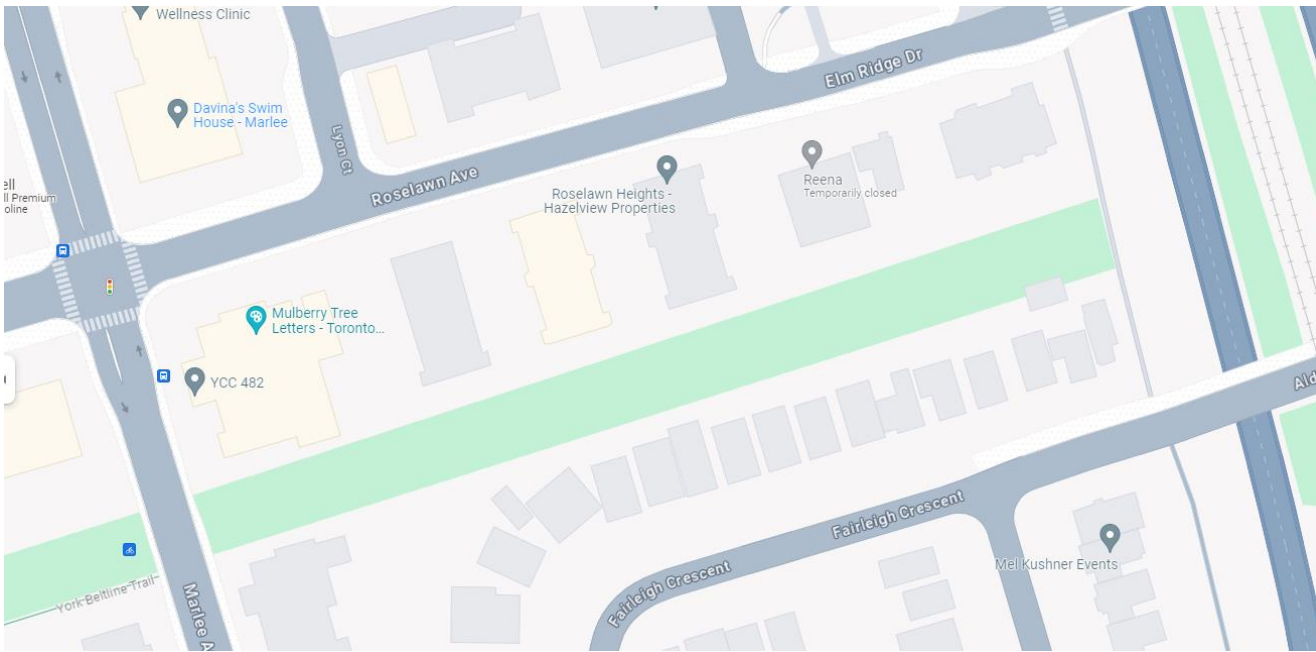


The City can contemplate widening the paths in these sections by cantilevering a portion of the trail over the Allen ROW. With creative thinking and long-term planning, we can find a way to widen the paths to accommodate safe, convenient and enjoyable multi-modal use by both pedestrians and cyclists.



<https://www.coastlinecomposites.com/project/236th-street-ne-cantilevered-sidewalk/>

Other References: <https://maadigroup.com/projects/page/3/>



Challenge 3:

Land Ownership & Subsurface Conflicts

- The City and affected private land-owners can explore the options under the **Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces (“POPS”)** construct.
- The condo association at 135 Marlee is excited to work with the City regarding its sub-surface parking garage and find engineering solutions to accommodate the construction of the York Beltline Trail extension.
- Construction of the Reena building at 165 Elm Ridge that currently impinges on the future Beltline Trail extension is temporary. We can start making plans so that its construction can incorporate design features of the trail extension.



CONCLUSION

Strong evidence shows that:

- The City has advanced the Beltline Gap Connections project without thorough analysis and coordination with other city projects/initiatives
- Mandatory studies that were to ensure the functionality and wellbeing of our complex area have not been completed
- The City has Ignored neighbourhood context and failed to create a collaborative consultation process.

To ensure the wellbeing of our neighbourhood, now and into the future, we ask that the City follow its own endorsed planning mandates and conduct proper public consultations on this matter.

Premature implementation of this project risks subjecting our neighbourhood to permanent debilitating congestion, residential infiltration, untenable conditions for businesses, pollution and gridlock

Our request to the city is pause the Beltline Gap Connections Project until:

- (1) A comprehensive, neighbourhood-wide mobility study is completed (which is being done as part of eglintonTOday)
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