



March 21, 2024

BRIEFING NOTE ON THE SCARBOROUGH RT CORRIDOR REUSE

The direction being pursued in motion **MM16.7** has been initiated without consultation and cooperation with the local councillor, in whose ward more than 95% of the RT corridor resides. Had such collaboration occurred, this motion for “adaptive reuse” of the RT corridor would have included the context presented in this Briefing Note.

Before we spend millions of dollars on a park in the sky, let’s consider that tearing down the 2.5 km elevated section of the RT may be the wise and fiscally prudent option. Let’s find out. Context is everything.

Parks, green space, butterfly meadows, farmer’s markets, bicycle paths and naturalized trails, where feasible and compatible with the BRT, may easily be accommodated in the corridor -- at grade.

My Motion **MM 16.29**, fills in the gaps, seeks information, assessment and analysis critical to understanding the issue. It asks the City Manager and staff to provide Council with a full analysis, costing, legal obstacles, development impact, a broad scan of the opportunities, challenges and the potential costs of the future use of the RT corridor.

MISSING CONTEXT

- Ward 21 residents, landowners and Councillor Thompson – for more than 10 years -- have exchanged ideas on the corridor’s future, post RT.
- The 2024 budget includes direction to replace the RT with a BRT in the same corridor. This piece of infrastructure – adaptive at its best – will cost \$100 million and last into the next century as a critical part of Toronto’s northeast transportation network.
- The elevated portion of the RT – occupying about 39 per cent of the corridor – is encumbered in many ways that city planning and legal should uncover in their report to council. For example:
- There’s an active development application for 100 Borough Drive where the landowner has a contractual agreement ensuring that the elevated portion of the RT that cuts

through this property is to be removed within a year (this summer) of RT decommissioning.

- By mid-2025, Oxford Properties, owner of the Scarborough Town Centre Mall, has a legal right to request removal of the elevated tracks and concrete podium that occupies a solid chunk of its parking lot.
- Multiple landowners have properties abutting the elevated guideway. Staff should identify these, indicate active development applications, and flag potential legal easement agreements and other encumbrances.

With this context in mind, let's get staff guidance before we approve spending millions of dollars to study how we might spend tens of millions of dollars for a concept very few of us can possibly grasp because so much is undefined.

In summary, the City manager should fully advise council of the potential costs and challenges before councillors tease the public with grandiose visions for the RT corridor reuse – and before city staff spend millions of dollars pursuing infrastructure we can't afford when our capital budget is unfunded by billions of dollars.

Other points of interest:

- The Scarborough Centre (OurSC) Study, to be made public by the end of the year, will outline a comprehensive and integrated plan and update the Scarborough Centre Secondary Plan.
- Scarborough Centre, the heart of the RT corridor, has grown from the early-1950s vision of community leaders intent on transforming the area into a complete community worthy of being the civic heart and downtown of Scarborough.
- This area is tied to transportation infrastructure. Initial urbanization followed the construction of Highway 401. The SRT's arrival in 1985 spurred another growth cycle. The coming subway is expected to trigger a new era of growth.