

Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction within the North York District – Q4 Update

Date: October 10, 2024

To: North York Community Council

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

Wards: 15, 16

SUMMARY

Through MM16.31 from the March 2024 meeting of City Council, City Council directed City staff to report to North York Community Council on the status and progress of Metrolinx's Ontario Line construction and the Province's Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) projects within the boundaries of North York. This report provides project details and a status update on the three Ontario Line stations and a TOC proposal located in North York.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Transit Expansion Division and Chief Planner & Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. North York Community Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with this report. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

A full decision history is provided in Attachment 1.

COMMENTS

1. Ontario Line Project Status and Schedule

The Province of Ontario is delivering the Ontario Line (OL), which is one of the four provincial priority subway projects, through its agency Metrolinx. The project scope within North York includes three OL stations located on the elevated portion of the guideway in North York - Thorncliffe Park, Flemingdon Park, and Science Centre Stations. The elevated guideway will begin at Minton Place Portal travelling north parallel to Millwood Road (the Leaside Bridge) before connecting with Overlea Boulevard where the Thorncliffe Park Station will be located. From there it will carry the Ontario Line across the Don Valley, over the E.T. Seton Park area and connect with Don Mills Road at Gateway Boulevard where Flemingdon Park Station will be located, and then finally travel north to the terminus at the Science Centre Station.

As well, the new Maintenance & Storage Facility (MSF) for the OL will be located just north of Thorncliffe Park Station on a site east of Laird Drive, between Overlea Boulevard and Wicksteed Avenue. The location of the three stations, MSF and crossings are shown in Figure 1 and 2 of Attachment 2.

Construction Updates

Broader updates on the OL project were provided most recently via EX16.3. Updates specific to North York segment are provided in the following sections.

Package of Work	Description & Timing
Key Early Works	<p>On May 3, 2024, Metrolinx awarded the contract for the Don Valley Crossings Early Works to Leaside Valley Builders GP. The project scope includes bridges at the Don Valley and West Don Crossings, reconstructing Beth Neilson Drive to create an underpass and other works to enable construction such as grade separations, excavation works, and slope stabilization.</p> <p>Construction of the first overpass, the West Don Crossing (WDC), commenced at the Minton Place Portal in summer 2024 and will continue until 2028. The WDC will travel northwards, parallel to Millwood Bridge (the Leaside Bridge) and terminate at Overlea Boulevard. Construction of the second overpass, the Don Valley Crossing (DVC) will commence just east of Beth Neilson Drive and will travel along the north side of Overlea Boulevard. It will span over the Don Valley, terminating at Don Mills Road and Gateway Boulevard (Flemingdon Park Station). See Figures 3-4 in Attachment 2 for renderings of the overpasses.</p>
Rolling Stock, Systems, Operations and Maintenance	<p>On November 17, 2022, Infrastructure Ontario (IO) and Metrolinx awarded the Rolling Stock, Systems, Operations and Maintenance (RSSOM) contract to Connect 6ix for the whole Ontario Line. The contract scope of work will include the design, build, finance,</p>

Contract (RSSOM)	operations and maintenance of the rolling stock (i.e. trains) and systems for a 30-year term. Connect 6ix started organizing design teams to commence the design work in 2023. The construction early works for the Maintenance Storage Facility (MSF) began in August 2023 and is currently ongoing with road reconstruction, utility work and demolition in the area of Overlea Boulevard, Beth Neilson Drive and Thorncliffe Park Drive.
Elevated Guideway and Stations Contract	<p>On February 20, 2024, IO and Metrolinx signed an agreement with Trillium Guideway Partners to deliver the Elevated Guideway and Stations Contract. The development/planning stage is anticipated to take up to 20 months (until October 2025), however, early works construction to facilitate the guideway are commencing during the development stage (as noted in the early works section above). The site for the future Thorncliffe Park Station, 26 Overlea Boulevard, was demolished in July and infrastructure and utility works, temporary traffic signal activation, and streetlighting upgrades along Overlea Boulevard and Millwood Road began in September and is expected to last throughout the fall. Test pit investigations and borehole drilling on Don Mills Road from Gateway Boulevard to Wynford Drive where the Ontario Line will travel between Flemingdon Park and Science Centre Station, began in late September and will continue until Spring 2025 to help crews gather information on soil and utilities in the area.</p> <p>The contract scope includes an elevated guideway and five elevated stations (i.e., Science Centre, Flemingdon Park, Thorncliffe Park, Riverside-Leslieville, and Gerrard), one emergency exit building, and the interface with the MSF as well as with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and other section sections of existing Metrolinx-owned rail corridor. Work is scheduled to commence October 2024.</p>

Metrolinx's Community Benefits and Supports Program

Metrolinx is implementing their Community Benefits and Supports Program on all their subway projects, including the Ontario Line. The 4 pillars to this program are (1) Employment Opportunities, (2) Local Business Supports, (3) Community Improvement Supports, and (4) Public Realm Improvements¹.

As part of Pillar 1 (Employment Opportunities), on January 24, 2024, Connect 6ix hosted a job fair in Thorncliffe Park to share information about current and future employment opportunities needed to help deliver the Ontario Line. There were over 100 positions available across all partners (excluding Metrolinx). There were 11 different employers and over 1,300 attendees.

One example of work under Pillar 2 (local business supports), is support for Iqbal Foods. The longstanding retail and meat processing facility in Thorncliffe Park was expropriated by Metrolinx for the construction of the MSF. Through PH8.22, Council requested an Enhanced Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) to allow Iqbal Food's new

¹ <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/community-benefits>

location at 100 Thorncliffe Park Drive to be zoned to allow retail use. The MZO was granted and filed on January 26, 2024, through O. Reg. 9/24 under the Planning Act, allowing retail store, warehouse and wholesaling use on the property. The new Iqbal Foods store is currently under construction and slated to open soon, with more details to be provided on the Iqbal Foods website once available.

As part of Pillar 3 (Community Improvement Supports), Metrolinx will be converting an existing Islamic Society of Toronto building into a new Islamic Centre as part of the Ontario Line project. The new facility will be located at 20 Overlea Boulevard in Thorncliffe Park, and will provide new and expansive religious, recreational and educational spaces for the community. Construction of the Islamic Centre is currently ongoing.

Public Realm Improvements (Pillar 4) are currently being discussed as part of the design of stations and the elevated guideway. Metrolinx is also seeking to enhance public reporting and transparency and has released the first annual report on Community Benefits for the Subway Program, including the Ontario Line, on September 9, 2024².

Public Engagement

Metrolinx held two open houses for Thorncliffe Park, in February and June 2024. These meetings provided an overview to the community of the next phases of work for the Ontario Line in the Thorncliffe Park area, including preparations for the MSF.

Metrolinx has nine active Construction Liaison Committees (CLCs) and community working groups for the Ontario Line, which are forums for two-way communication and sharing of information related to Ontario Line construction activities for each specified area. Members include local community organizations, City staff, elected officials, and project team members. Metrolinx will be organizing additional CLCs as their contractors are onboarded in the northern segments of the alignment, and more details will be provided to the community when available. Metrolinx has also opened a Community Office in Thorncliffe Park, which is located at East York Town Centre at 45 Overlea Boulevard.

Ontario Line Subcommittee Recommendations for Metrolinx

On July 19, 2023, through TM2.1, City Council adopted City staff recommendations for Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction within the Toronto and East York District. These recommendations include best practices related to community benefits, business supports, community engagement, traffic and construction management, affordable housing and rental replacement, real estate, and parks and neighbourhood investments.

The City and community groups located along the north segment of the Ontario Line requested that the recommendations also be applied to wards in North York impacted by Ontario Line construction. Metrolinx confirmed they would apply the same

²

https://assets.metrolinx.com/image/upload/Documents/Metrolinx/Making_Community_Benefits_and_Supports_Happen_2023-24.pdf

recommendations noted in TM2.1 to the north segment of the OL. The details of Metrolinx's response were outlined in [TE10.40](#). The Transit Expansion Division will continue to work with Metrolinx to advocate for the implementation of all of the recommendations noted in TE 10.40 and adopted by City Council.

2. Transit-Oriented Communities

Infrastructure Ontario (IO) is delivering the Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Program on behalf of the provincial Ministry of Infrastructure. IO works with Metrolinx to understand the property requirements for the Subway Program projects and, where feasible, develops TOC proposals that would integrate development above and/or adjacent to transit facilities. Only lands directly impacted by Metrolinx are eligible to be considered for a TOC development.

Since the launch of the provincial TOC Program in late 2019, the City has been working with the Province to review and provide input to TOC proposals for the Subway Program projects, including the Ontario Line. To date the City has received and reviewed TOC proposals at nine Ontario Line stations. At this time, the only TOC proposed in Ward 15 and Ward 16 is located at Thorncliffe Park Station. Additional future TOCs may also be proposed on the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue as well as the future Ontario Line Science Centre Station given the nature and extent of property impacts in that location.

Thorncliffe Park TOC Update

The Thorncliffe Park TOC proposal was received by City Planning staff in October 2023 as part of the second round of TOCs submitted by IO. The proposal comprises a mixed-use development including six residential towers and one office building at heights ranging from 13 to 56 storeys and 2,665 residential units with 36% of units designed as 2- and 3-bedroom units. The proposed floor space index (FSI) is 8.45 and gross floor area (GFA) is 216,591 m². The proposal introduces residential, office, retail, park and privately-owned publicly accessible spaces (POPS) uses to two sites flanking the Islamic Society of Toronto property at 20 Overlea Boulevard.

The site is currently designated General Employment in the Official Plan and zoned Employment Industrial/Business Center. Five of the six towers would contain retail uses at grade, with a contiguous public realm network providing pedestrian connectivity across the site. The proposal conveys land to the City for a new public park and provides a series of POPS. The office building and retail uses are intended to replace the industrial and commercial employment uses that currently exist on the site today.

City staff completed a full technical review of the submission and provided IO with comments. A summary of key issues arising from the review was reported to Council through PH12.5 Transit-Oriented Communities Update in May 2024. Similar to earlier TOC proposals, IO is currently reviewing the City's feedback and refining the development concept. The City expects to receive a re-submission in fall 2024. At the time of the resubmission, IO will conduct a second round of public engagement. The Province will then move forward to authorize the development via a Minister's Zoning Order.

City staff are engaged in negotiations regarding requirements for affordable housing, community benefits (allocation of value created by Province in TOC sites towards enhancements to public infrastructure and community amenities such as daycares and libraries), servicing, parkland dedication, and subsequent planning approvals. The outcome of these negotiations will form the terms of a site-specific TOC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Province and City. The MOU will form part of a Commercial Agreement between the Province and its TOC development partner. Further planning approvals will be required which will be secured through agreements between the TOC development partner and the City.

Public Engagement

To help inform the Province's TOC concepts for each site, IO has hosted a series of public consultations including local advisory committee (LACs) meetings, an in-person open house and virtual open houses. The Thorncliffe Park TOC LAC meetings were held in February and March 2024 and a third LAC meeting is targeted for October 2024. The LAC membership includes local residents, businesses, and property owners, and the local Councillor. The first virtual open house was held in February 2024 and a second virtual open house is also targeted for October 2024. An in-person consultation was held in March 2024. For more information visit the City's website TOC program³ and IO's website on the Thorncliffe Park TOC⁴.

Next Steps

City staff continue to be engaged in reviewing Subway Program designs, facilitating permits and approvals, and generally advocating for and protecting City interests through all stages of Metrolinx's project delivery. City staff are guided by existing agreements between the City and Metrolinx, as well as various Council directives, including direction under EX15.2. In addition, City staff will continue negotiations with IO and will seek authority from City Council to finalize the TOC MOU when draft terms are settled. A report to Council is anticipated in the first half of 2025 that will provide a final City position on the TOC proposal and outline next steps.

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SIGNATURE

³ <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/transit-in-toronto/transit-oriented-communities/#location=&lat=&lng=&zoom=>

⁴ <https://engageio.ca/en/ThorncliffePark>

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Relevant Decision History
Attachment 2 – Ontario Line North Appendix