

Waterfront East Light Rail Transit – Advancing Enabling Work with the Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm Project

Date: June 30, 2025

To: Executive Committee

From: Executive Director, Transit Expansion Division

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Waterfront East Light Rail Transit project (WELRT) is a City of Toronto (City) priority transit project, bringing higher-order transit to the central and eastern waterfront area, including to the Quayside precinct (see Attachment 1 – Figure 1 for WELRT alignment).

Waterfront Toronto is working on behalf of the City to advance the design of the at-grade segments of the WELRT to the 60% design development stage. Along the WELRT alignment, and within the Quayside precinct, Waterfront Toronto in collaboration with the City is also undertaking the Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm project (QIPR) to design and construct streets, servicing and public spaces.

In June 2025, Waterfront Toronto notified the City of an opportunity to expedite delivery of two WELRT enabling works projects in coordination with the QIPR project (see Attachment 1 – Figure 2 for location):

1. Construction of an electrical duct bank on Small Street; and
2. Relocation of a Toronto Hydro Electric System Limited (THESL) duct bank below Queens Quay East, west of Small Street (collectively the “Enabling Works”).

Coordinating construction of these two Enabling Works projects with the QIPR project will benefit the City by:

- Avoiding future construction complexity due to the proximity of the work to the future Inner Harbour West Tunnel shaft along Small Street;
- Designing and installing new electrical connections to the THESL duct bank on Queens Quay East;
- Accelerating work that would be delayed due to the Gardiner Expressway Realignment project, and development of the Quayside community;

- Protecting for and enabling the WELRT electrical substation construction at the preferred location;
- Avoiding a need to override the moratorium on construction following reopening of Small Street and Queens Quay East; and
- Reducing costs and project risk by delivering the Enabling Works now, rather than in the future.

Given that the utilities portion of the QIPR contract is currently in procurement with award anticipated in September 2025, a funding commitment for the Enabling Works is required by Waterfront Toronto to take advantage of this opportunity for construction coordination. This report seeks City Council authority to provide Waterfront Toronto with up to \$5.05M of the existing Council approved WELRT funding to deliver the Enabling Works through the QIPR project. Subject to Council approval of this report, and entering into an agreement with Waterfront Toronto, construction for these works is anticipated to begin in Q1 2026 and take approximately 5 months to complete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Transit Expansion Division recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Executive Director, Transit Expansion, to request that Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation (Waterfront Toronto) undertake the following enabling works to advance the Waterfront East Light Rail Transit (WELRT) project, up to a cost of \$5.05M, as part of Waterfront Toronto's Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm project:
 - a) Construction of a duct bank on Small Street; and
 - b) Relocation of a Toronto Hydro Electric System Limited (THESL) duct bank underneath Queens Quay East, west of Small Street (collectively the "Enabling Works").
2. City Council authorize the Executive Director, Transit Expansion to negotiate and execute an agreement, including amendments thereto, with Waterfront Toronto, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Executive Director, Transit Expansion and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, to facilitate the delivery of the Enabling Works.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

There are no financial impacts to the City resulting from the recommendations presented in this report. City Council has previously approved funding of \$135.3 million to advance the WELRT project of which \$59.6 million is included in Transit Expansion's 2025 – 2034 Capital Budget and Plan and is available to support the Enabling Works recommended in this report along with other planned project activities scheduled in 2025.

The cost for the Enabling Works, are inclusive of Waterfront Toronto's design fees, construction costs and contingency. A financial commitment from the City is required in

July 2025 to ensure the scope identified in this report is included within the utilities portion of the QIPR project that is expected to be awarded in September 2025.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impacts as outlined in the Financial Impact Section of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

In May 2025, City Council adopted, *TE22.14 - Construction Staging Area – Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm Project*, authorizing various lane closures and other traffic management actions to enable Waterfront Toronto to deliver sub-surface enabling infrastructure and public space in the Quayside precinct.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.TE22.14>

On February 05, 2025, City Council adopted, with amendments, *EX20.10 - Advancing the Waterfront East Light Rail Transit* and approved development of a Phasing and Delivery Plan, along with advancing beyond 60 percent design for Queens Quay East Extension between Parliament Street and Cherry Street.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX20.10>

In November 2023, City Council adopted, *EX9.14 - Advancing Waterfront East Light Rail Transit* and approved the alignment of the Waterfront East LRT (WELRT), in addition to advancing to 60 percent design, securing environmental approvals and developing a traffic management plan. This report also permitted staff to coordinate scope and design with interfacing projects and allocated \$64.6 million in funding for the WELRT project.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EX9.14>

In June 2022, City Council adopted, with amendments, *EX33.2 - Advancing City Priority Transit Expansion Projects – Eglinton East Light Rail Transit and Waterfront East Light Rail Transit* and directed staff to undertake a constructability review of the project and report back on a recommended alignment and scope, an updated cost estimate and a funding, financing, and implementation strategy, including a phasing plan.

Link: <https://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX33.2>

In December 2020, City Council adopted, with amendments, *EX19.5 - Update on the City's Transit Expansion Projects – Fourth Quarter 2020* and directed staff to report back on the updated business case analysis, recommended schedule, and phased approach for the Waterfront Transit priority segments, including Union Station to Queens Quay Link and the East Bayfront LRT.

Link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2020.EX19.5>

In February 2020, City Council adopted, with amendments, *PH13.3 - Official Plan Review: Transportation – Recommended Official Plan Amendment*, and approved changes to strengthen existing transit and transportation policies. The changes include the expansion and protection of higher-order transit and enhanced surface transit networks that include the Waterfront Transit Network.

Link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.PH13.3>

In April 2019, City Council adopted, with amendments, *EX4.1 - Toronto's Transit Expansion Program – Update and Next Steps* to advance components of the Waterfront Transit Network, including the Union Station to Queens Quay and East Bayfront Light Rail Transit projects.

Link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EX4.1>

In January 2018, City Council adopted, with amendments, *EX30.1 - Waterfront Transit Network Plan* and endorsed the overall Waterfront Transit Network Plan, including the identification of priority segments. City Council directed staff to complete a focused feasibility study of light rail and automated funicular technology options for connecting transit below grade between Union Station and Queens Quay.

Link: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX30.1>

COMMENTS

Project Update

The Waterfront East Light Rail Transit (WELRT) is a City of Toronto priority transit project. According to growth projections, when fully built, this 3.8-kilometre planned transit line will provide over 50,000 daily trips, bringing higher-order transit to support an estimated 100,000 residents and 50,000 jobs along its alignment. The WELRT will provide improved transit options to the Central Waterfront, Lower Yonge, East Bayfront, Quayside, Keating Precinct, and the Port Lands communities, and is an integral part of the future development on Ookwemin Minising.

In November 2023, through EX9.14, City Council approved the advancement of the at-grade segments to 60% design. Completion of the 60% design is anticipated for Q4 2025. In January 2025, through EX20.10, City Council also authorized staff to undertake a Phasing and Delivery Plan that will confirm the delivery approach for the full LRT and options for early phase transit improvements. City staff plan to award this scope of work in July 2025 following a successful Request for Quotations which closed in June 2025.

Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm Project

As reported in TE22.14, the Quayside Infrastructure and Public Realm Project (QIPR) led by Waterfront Toronto in collaboration with the City, encompasses the design and construction of streets, servicing and public spaces to support Quayside revitalization. This work includes underground infrastructure and utility work followed by road reconstruction on Small Street and Queens Quay East. Construction work for QIPR began in June 2025 and is expected to be completed by September 2026.

The road realignments included in the QIPR project will unlock development parcels including for a joint venture by Dream Unlimited Corp. and Great Gulf Group (collectively known as Quayside Impact Limited Partnership, QILP). A preferred location for a Traction Power Substation (TPSS) (see Attachment 1 – Figure 2), which will power the future WELRT, has been identified within the Quayside Development of the QILP project. QILP is responsible for allocating the space and constructing the TPSS as per the development agreement between QILP, TTC and Waterfront Toronto. City staff are working with Waterfront Toronto to finalize the specific requirements, cost estimates and

terms for the TPSS delivery by QILP and will provide an update in the planned Q1 2026 WELRT report.

Opportunity for Enabling Works Capital Coordination

In June 2025, Waterfront Toronto notified the City of an opportunity to expedite delivery of two planned WELRT Enabling Works in coordination with the utility work included in the QIPR project.

1. Small Street Duct Bank

The Small Street duct bank is an underground structure that would house the WELRT electrical conduits and connect it to the planned TPSS power source in Quayside Development. Given the QIPR project includes underground infrastructure and utility work on Small Street, the addition of the duct bank work to the project would minimize risk and costs. A financial commitment from the City of approximately \$1.95M in July 2025 is required for this scope to be added to Waterfront Toronto's project.

Not including this work in the QIPR project presents the following risks:

- **Additional Costs:** Alternatives to the QIPR delivery are estimated to cost between \$6.1M to \$12.1M, based on having to reinstate newly installed public realm elements, find less preferred connection points, or undertake a full relocation;
- **Project Delays:** Due to the moratorium on construction following road openings, the duct bank construction may be delayed for several years as Small Street will have been recently reconstructed;
- **Project Coordination:** Due to proximity to adjacent utilities and future Inner Harbour West Tunnel shaft, there will be significant challenges for future construction; and
- **TPSS Delivery:** If the duct bank cannot be delivered, an alternative location for the TPSS would need to be identified despite this being the preferred location. Alternative locations have not been identified.

2. Toronto Hydro Electric System Limited (THESL) Duct Bank

The existing THESL duct bank runs along the southern portion of Queens Quay East, west of Small Street. This duct bank conflicts with the future WELRT alignment and is required to be relocated.

The QIPR scope includes utility work along the segment of Queens Quay East where the THESL duct bank is located. The duct bank is expected to be connected to future Quayside developments. If additional connections are made to the duct bank before it is relocated, the relocation becomes more complex. Given these two factors, there are significant benefits to completing the THESL duct bank relocation as soon as possible through the utility portion of the QIPR project. A financial commitment from the City of approximately \$3.1M in July 2025 is required for this scope to be added to Waterfront Toronto's project.

Not including this work in the QIPR project presents the following risks:

- **Development Connection:** Relocation in the future may become more challenging due to possible existing connections for adjacent planned development;
- **Additional Costs:** Alternatives to the QIPR delivery are estimated to cost between \$3.5M to \$15.1M depending on if the work happens prior to or following the development connection to the duct bank; and
- **Project Delays:** Due to the moratorium on construction following road openings, the duct bank construction may be delayed for several years as Queens Quay East will have been recently reconstructed.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Given the opportunities and risks outlined above, City staff recommend Council authorize advancing the above listed WELRT Enabling Works with Waterfront Toronto. Funding for this work is available within the Council approved WELRT budget.

Subject to Council approval, City staff will negotiate an agreement with Waterfront Toronto for the delivery of the Enabling Works outlined in this report. The utility portion of the QIPR contract for the work between Small Street to Victory Soya Mills Silos is anticipated to be awarded by Waterfront Toronto in September 2025, with construction start for the two duct banks in Q1 2026. This work will take approximately 5 months to complete. An update on the progress of the Enabling Works will be included in the scheduled Q1 2026 WELRT report to City Council.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: WELRT Alignment & Enabling Works Map