

King Street Transit Priority Corridor Improvement - Update Report

Date: February 12, 2025

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee

From: General Manager, Transportation Services

Wards: 10 - Spadina-Fort York, 13 - Toronto Centre

SUMMARY

Transportation Services, in partnership with TTC and the Toronto Police Service, are continuing efforts to support and improve operations on the King Street Transit Priority Corridor. Several efforts have already been taken in 2024 including traffic management support from Traffic Agents, traffic signal timing and traffic signal modifications, and platform and general public realm improvements. Exemptions were also made to allow for the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus and Toronto Community Crisis Service Vehicles to utilize the King Street Priority Corridor. All of the measures taken to date have improved the operations and safety for all road users along the corridor.

As requested by City Council at its meeting on May 22 and 24, 2024, this report provides updates on the following:

- the effect of traffic signal modifications on transit operations and traffic flow along King Street;
- status update on the automated enforcement strategy to help mitigate the impacts of vehicles blocking the intersections (i.e. block-the-box);
- the proposed public realm improvements, including, but not limited to, mid-block curb extensions, transit bump outs, widened sidewalks, and public realm spaces; and;
- a status update on the King Street working group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Transportation Services recommends that:

1. Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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 2025-2034 Capital Budget and Plan for Transportation Services (CTP419-03).

The estimated cost to deploy Traffic Agents as required, is included in the 2025 Operating Budget for Transportation Services.

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

On December 17 and 18 2024, City Council adopted MM24.12 Ontario Line Vehicle Exemption along King Street West at Portland Street authorizing vehicles transporting materials or equipment, working for Metrolinx on the Ontario Line, to proceed through the intersection along King Street West at Portland Street when through travel easterly and westerly are restricted.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM24.12>

On November 13 and 14, 2024 City Council adopted MM23.4 Toronto Community Crisis Service Vehicle Exemption along King Street Priority Corridor, authorizing Toronto Community Crisis Service Vehicles to proceed through an intersection along the King Street corridor when through travel is restricted.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.MM23.4>

On May 22 and 23, 2024, City Council adopted IE13.13 King Street Transit Priority Corridor Update authorizing the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus to utilize the King Street Transit Priority Corridor, directing the General Manager, Transportation Services to create a King Street working group and to report back to Infrastructure and Environment Committee on the status of a number of recommendations.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE13.3>

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

Background

The King Street Transit Priority Corridor between Bathurst Street and Jarvis Street prioritizes 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.

In 2023, streetcars on the King Street Transit Priority Corridor experienced significant travel times delays due to traffic diverting away for road closures elsewhere in the city on to King Street. Further, traffic data collected revealed a marked increase in non-compliance with respect to motorists driving through intersections with an observed 110 violations per hour at King and Yonge Street in particular. City staff undertook several measures including traffic signal timing adjustments, traffic signal modifications, traffic agent deployments and increase to fines for 'block-the-box' infractions, supported by signage and an enforcement blitz conducted by Toronto Police Service.

The following sections provide updates and next steps in the ongoing efforts to improve and support the King Street Transit Priority Corridor.

Effects of Traffic Signal Improvements and Next Steps

In April 2024, Transportation Services modified the traffic signals along King Street at the intersections of Yonge Street and Church Street, to reinforce the corridor's road rules. The new measures included the addition of dedicated bicycle and transit signals, to reduce the likelihood of motorists accidentally making an illegal movement, such as driving through an intersection on a green light reserved for streetcars, people cycling and authorized vehicles.

Eastbound and westbound motorists receive an advance right turn green arrow ahead of the transit, bicycle and pedestrian signal phases to ensure motorists can turn safely and efficiently. A solid green signal no longer appears on the main traffic lights, except between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. when taxis are authorized to travel through the intersections.

Following these modifications, staff observed that right turning vehicles in the east and west bound directions were encountering delays by people cycling in front of them

waiting to make a through movement. In some cases, this led to people cycling making illegal and unsafe through movements on a red signal.

In October 2024, Transportation Services further modified signal phasing, pavement markings and single file signage, to allow the people cycling and right turning vehicles to advance at the same time, while maintaining safety for people cycling, given the limited road width.

The City will continue to monitor safety and compliance with the new measures implemented on King Street and make further adjustments as necessary. Transportation Services has a tentative 2025 plan to perform similar upgrades at six (6) additional traffic signals along King Street. However, it should be noted that some of the issues around non-compliance and congestion arose from construction works on parallel routes routing traffic onto King Street. With those parallel works being completed, Transportation Services will factor this into determining the urgency or need to modify additional signals.

Ongoing 'Block-the-Box' Enforcement Efforts

Traffic Agents actively manage people and traffic to keep intersections clear and roads safe. In November 2023, Traffic Agents were first deployed to King Street and continue to be deployed at key locations along this corridor. The Traffic Agents direct vehicles to adhere to signage giving priority to transit. With agents present, TTC travel times were reduced from 45-65 minutes to 17-21 minutes along the corridor. They are typically stationed at University Avenue, Bay Street, Yonge Street, and Jarvis Street. Traffic Agents also ensure pedestrians and people cycling follow the appropriate signals and do not endanger themselves or others while on Toronto's roadways.

In August 2024, the Regional Senior Justice approved the City's request to increase the fines for an improper stop in an intersection from \$90 to \$450, and \$120 to \$500 for an improper stop in an intersection in a Community Safety Zone. As the changes have now come into effect, Transportation Services is collaborating with Toronto Police Service to develop an enforcement and educational awareness campaign to promote these changes. Static signs were installed in early September at locations where Traffic Agents work to remind drivers not to block the intersections and to inform them of the increased fines associated with this offence.

In November 2024, Toronto Police Service provided support to the City's efforts towards mitigating 'Block-the-Box' violations. Officers from the Traffic Service Motor Squad provided education and enforcement to motorists violating 'Block-the-Box' targeting peak traffic hours and focusing on major intersections citywide. Officers were very effective in their campaign guiding drivers to nearby parking areas or side streets to issue tickets, reducing the impact on traffic flow while holding motorists accountable.

Automated Enforcement Strategy for 'Block-the-Box' Violations

Automated Enforcement for 'Block-the-Box' violations is the most sustainable approach to the ongoing issue. However, there are many stages required before the program can be fully implemented. The technology used for automated speed enforcement or red

light camera running cannot be used for this application because the images captured to demonstrate a violation in those programs is insufficient to demonstrate intentional blocking of the intersection. As a first major step towards implementing this new program, on November 4, 2024 Transportation Services staff issued a Transportation Innovation Challenge (TIC) on Automated Enforcement that specifically cited the City's need to investigate different enforcement camera technologies to support 'block-the-box', illegal driving or block a bus or bike lane.

The TIC will gather data to help:

- confirm that the evidence gathered from the technologies can be used to effectively charge motorists for the respective traffic violations;
- establish technology requirements that can be used for a subsequent procurement;
- establish protocols on how to review evidence and assess which situations warrant motorists being charged versus not and;
- assess whether or not there are necessary changes to either provincial or municipal legislation to support the program.

The TIC received a record number of applications. Twelve applicants with appropriate technology and readiness have advanced in the next phase of the City's process, which will assess each applicant's privacy and cybersecurity measures. Given the number of applicants and the duration of each assessment, the cybersecurity assessment phase will begin with the most promising applicants, starting in February 2025 and continuing into early Q2. Applicants that pass these assessments, and whose devices are deemed feasible to deploy on City infrastructure and TTC vehicles, will be invited to sign a legal agreement with the City to become TIC Participants. Concurrently, staff are working to finalize intersection locations and bus routes for deployment, coordinate details such as regulatory signage to inform the public of the presence of cameras and develop a shared communications strategy with TTC.

Presuming a seamless schedule, the earliest first deployment could start in Q2 2025. Additional deployments would follow as applicants move through the assessments and as quickly as the City and TTC are able to arrange. It should be noted that although data will be collected through this TIC, none of the data collected will be associated with any individual and no tickets will be issued.

A working group has been established that includes Transportation Services, Courts and Fines, Toronto Police Service, Parking Enforcement, Legal Services, Toronto Parking Authority and the TTC to be engaged, lend expertise and to combine efforts to expedite the overall process of bringing the new automated enforcement programs into operation.

Exemptions for Specialized Operations on King Street

In addition to serving as a transit priority corridor, in 2024 City Council approved exemptions for other vehicles to traverse through intersections to support critical city functions. Both the Billy Bishop Airport Shuttle Bus, which carries travellers between Union Station and the island airport, as well as Toronto Community Crisis Service Vehicles now have authorization to proceed along the King Street Transit Priority Corridor. An exemption was also granted at the intersection of King Street West and

Portland Street for Metrolinx contractors' vehicles transporting materials or equipment for the Ontario Line construction.

At this point in time, no other exemptions are being considered and any further requests for consideration need to be thoroughly analyzed to understand if there would be adverse affects on streetcar operations.

Updates on Public Realm Improvements: Near-Term and Future

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

Streetcar Platform Improvements

Raised modular transit stop platforms were installed on King Street at Portland Street and Peter Street in 2019. Note that the raised transit stop platform at Peter Street was previously removed due to adjacent development construction. The raised transit stop platforms:

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

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 is advancing plans to raise the remaining transit stops using modular raised transit platforms in the near-term, in coordination with major track and roadwork on King Street.

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 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 planned for installation of 2 locations in Spring 2025.

The remaining locations require additional 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.

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 2025.

Mid-Block Improvements

Design criteria has been developed to help inform future construction and curb extension opportunities throughout the corridor. Transportation Services is working with City Planning and have secured boulevard and curb extensions fronting recent development applications including: 400 King Street West, 301-319 King Street West, 260-322 King Street West, and 69 Yonge Street. Some of the improvements secured through development include tree planting. Through the development review and application process, curb extensions have been requested but not confirmed for the following locations: King / Bathurst Metrolinx station, 212-220 King Street West, 25 King Street West, 34-50 King Street East.

Outside of planned development and scheduled construction in the corridor, Transportation Services plans to pursue the implementation of mid-block curb extensions that can be implemented with precast curbs and precast pavers on existing asphalt, without disturbing existing street drainage patterns at locations that do not interfere with TTC stops, turning lanes, or on-street loading or parking areas. A design contract will be awarded in 2025. Initial installations are planned to be scheduled on King St between Bathurst Street and Portland Street, and between Church Street and Jarvis Street, beginning in 2026.

Future Streetscape Improvements

As a longer-term strategy, the proposed mid-block improvements and modular raised transit stops will be replaced with permanently constructed elements, as well as widened sidewalks and public realm spaces, in coordination with future corridor construction projects. As private redevelopment continues to take place along this section of King Street, staff will continue to explore opportunities to improve the streetscape in coordination with those projects.

Staff will 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 (BIAs), in developing a unified streetscape plan that responds to and enhances King Street's distinct character.

King Street Working Group

As directed by Council, Transportation Services and TTC staff facilitated a working group to gather feedback on King Street Transit Priority Corridor improvements. In addition to City and TTC staff, the working group included representatives from the offices of Councillor Moise, Deputy Mayor Malik, TTC Chair and Councillor Myers, the BIAs and Resident/Neighbourhood Associations along the corridor, StopGap, TTC Riders, and CycleToronto. The first meeting was held on January 14, 2025. City staff are planning to continue engaging with members of the working group with updates and opportunities to gain valuable feedback.

Next Steps for the King Street Transit Priority Corridor

Traffic Agent Support - Transportation Services will continue to provide Traffic Agents along this corridor and will continue to monitor the effectiveness and make changes to locations as deemed necessary.

Traffic Signal Modifications - Transportation Services has a tentative plan to conduct additional traffic signal upgrades at six (6) locations along King Street in 2025 to help provide greater clarity for all road users at the intersections of the intended operation.

Automated Enforcement support for 'Block-the-Box' violations - Early results from the Automated Enforcement TIC related to movement infractions affecting the King Street Corridor are anticipated in Q3 2025. Further updates on next steps with respect to the City's efforts towards automated enforcement will be included in the April update to the Congestion Management Plan.

Construction Traffic Mitigation Planning - Transportation Services will coordinate closely with TTC on construction traffic impact mitigation plans to help maintain reliable of TTCs service and while trying to minimize the impacts on traffic.

Public Realm Improvements - A design contract will be undertaken in 2025 for the implementation of mid-block curb extensions. The installations are anticipated to commence in 2026.

King Street Transit Priority Corridor Working Group - Additional engagement with the group on updates and next steps will be undertaken as needed.

CONTACT

Roger Browne
Director, Traffic Management
Transportation Services
416-392-5372
Roger.Browne@toronto.ca

Jacquelyn Hayward
Director, Planning, Design & Management
Transportation Services
416-392-5348
Jacquelyn.Hayward@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Barbara Gray
General Manager
Transportation Services