

East-West Water Shuttle Pilot and Bathurst Quay

Date: May 4th, 2026

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Waterfront Secretariat, City Planning Division; Director, Enforcement and Street Management, Transportation Services

Wards: Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

Waterfront Toronto, together with the City and the Toronto Port Authority are initiating an East-West Water Shuttle Pilot in June 2026 to provide more east-west service across the Inner Harbour. This new service has the potential to reduce vehicular traffic across the central waterfront and provide new opportunities for residents and visitors to move around the central waterfront. Such efforts may assist all modes by increasing capacity and alleviating pressure on road networks, as recommended in the City's recently updated [Congestion Management Plan](#).

This report is a response to 2025.TE27.88, which directed that staff consult with Waterfront Toronto and the Toronto Police Service, to report back to the May 28, 2026 meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council on traffic impacts and management in Bathurst Quay related to the pilot. The report provides a brief background on the objectives and rationale for the pilot and expanding marine transportation options. This report also outlines how access to the water shuttle will be managed, with sensitivity to pre-existing traffic management challenges in the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood.

Access to quantitative data is central to making informed recommendations to Council regarding changes to constrained transportation networks, such as at Bathurst Quay. City staff will report on a performance review of the water shuttle pilot upon the conclusion of its first term, which is maximum 5 years in duration. This review will be used to assess the impact, and market feasibility of permanently expanded marine transportation options connecting Portland Slip, Yonge Slip and Biidaasige Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director, Waterfront Secretariat, City Planning Division, recommends that:

1. The Toronto and East York Community Council direct the Director, Waterfront Secretariat to provide an update on the implementation of the East-West Water Shuttle Pilot Project, no later than Q3 2028.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan

On June 26, 2018, City Council adopted the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan Study and related Site and Area Specific Policy 189. The Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan Study established a vision, guiding principles and actions to provide a framework for achieving a complete community on the waterfront. The plan provided direction on transportation issues such as co-ordination with public realm improvements, enhanced safety and increased connectivity for non-vehicular modes of transportation.

[Agenda Item History - 2018.TE33.9](#)

Improved Active Transportation and Water Access to Toronto Island Park

On May 21st, 2025, City Council adopted a report considering improved active transportation access to Toronto Island, including possibilities for a fixed link across the Eastern Gap. This report also responds to other directives related to moving visitors to and from Toronto Island Park, including opportunities to maximize the service of private water taxi operators and enhanced marine transportation options in the Inner Harbour.

[Agenda Item History - 2025.EX23.1](#)

Location of Hoverlink terminal adjacent to the Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport

On June 5, 2025, Toronto East York Community Council directed the Director, Waterfront Secretariat, in consultation with Waterfront Toronto, report back to the Toronto East York Community Council in Q1 2026 on the results of project related technical studies, to be provided by Hoverlink Ontario and/or the Toronto Port Authority.

[Agenda Item History - 2025.TE23.56](#)

Water Shuttle Pilot - Bathurst Quay Traffic Impact Review

On November 7th, 2025, a member's motion was adopted directing staff to report back to the May 28, 2026 meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council on traffic impacts and management in Bathurst Quay related to Waterfront Toronto's east-west water shuttle pilot.

Bathurst Quay Transportation Study

On February 19, 2026, Toronto and East York Community Council directed the Director, Waterfront Secretariat, in consultation with Transportation Planning, City Planning and Transportation Services, to undertake a comprehensive multi-modal transportation study and road safety audit of Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood to understand baseline mobility conditions and report back in the third quarter of 2027 on the preliminary findings and recommended next steps.

[Agenda Item History - 2026.TE29.69](#)

BACKGROUND

Marine Use Strategy (2020)

The [2020 Marine Use Strategy](#), was an initiative led by Waterfront Toronto, in partnership with the City of Toronto, Toronto Port Authority and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. The Marine Use Strategy is a long-term roadmap that highlights ways to balance the diverse uses of Toronto's harbour while exploring opportunities for people to more easily access and interact with the harbour, by water and by land. The strategy calls for "more connections to more destinations," encouraging water-based transportation options that support the city's growing waterfront communities.

Sea Bus Feasibility Study (2026)

The [2026 Sea Bus Feasibility Study](#) flows from a recommendation from the Marine Use Strategy. Analysis presented in the study focuses on the feasibility of new marine transportation services within Toronto's Inner Harbour and opportunities for improvement of the existing marine transport system.

The primary goal of the Seabus Feasibility Study was to assess the viability of introducing fixed route, set-timetable marine passenger services in Toronto's Inner Harbour. Five potential route options were analyzed, connecting locations across the Inner Harbour, from Ontario Place in the west to Ookwemin Minising (formerly Villiers Island) in the east, the Toronto Islands in the south and including the Outer Harbour.

Toronto's marine transport users are primarily tourists and recreational users, while Vancouver, Halifax, New York and San Francisco all connect large resident populations and commuters through marine transport. A Marine Use Strategy was undertaken by Waterfront Toronto to broadly explore untapped potential in Toronto for marine transport, with a thematic focus on mooring, movement and management of marine activities (completed in 2020). The strategy recommended advancing enabling projects for each of these themes, including advancing a feasibility study for the introduction of a sea bus system on the Waterfront under the 'movement' theme.

The Sea Bus Feasibility Study was then initiated to further assess the potential of a broadened user base of marine transportation users, supported by ridership data and surveys to inform future planning decisions on operational models and stop locations (completed in 2026). Findings outlined opportunities to improve marine transportation options and explored potential pilot routes and their respective challenges and opportunities. The report found that the information gathered in a recommended pilot project would provide important guidance for any future planning decisions on long term marine transportation options and their viability.

East-West Water Shuttle Pilot (2026)

The East-West Water Shuttle Pilot emerged as a recommendation from the Sea Bus Feasibility Study, which outlined a phased approach to testing and implementing expanded east-west focused water-based transit similar to other major waterfront cities. The pilot is being administered by Waterfront Toronto with support from the City of Toronto and the Toronto Port Authority. York Bay Marine Services (YBM) is the successful proponent of a Request for Proposals to provide the service for the pilot and will report to Waterfront Toronto with project updates and any potential issues to be resolved. The Council-directed Toronto Island Access and Inner Harbour Task Force also has a standing agenda item for issues resolution related to this pilot. YBM's proposal for the pilot assumed all capital and operating costs for duration of the pilot.

This summer's pilot will serve as a first step to better understand ridership demand, operational requirements, and service performance on Toronto's waterfront. Operating from June through September for an initial three (3) year term, the water shuttle will connect three stops:

- Ookwemin Minising, Port Lands (New) – providing direct access to Biidaasige Park
- Yonge Street Slip (Existing) – serving the Central Waterfront
- Portland Slip / Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (New) – connecting the west end of the Central Waterfront

YBM has more than 20 years of experience operating in Toronto Harbour. YBM also manages multiple waterfront facilities including the Kiss n' Sail at Yonge Street Slip, Toronto Island Marina, Island Yacht Club, Toronto Harbour Nautical Centre, and marina infrastructure on the Toronto Islands, with experience supporting marine access and waterfront operations.

As a condition of contract award, YBM is required to collect data to evaluate the pilot project, including but not limited to ridership demand and origin/destination information. Service will be provided using an existing fleet of small water taxi vessels with a capacity of 12 persons per vessel. Service capacity may be increased to accommodate for peak demand times using YBM's existing fleet as needed. The vessels and dock infrastructure will be fully accessible and are registered with Transport Canada. YBM is also required to work with Waterfront Toronto and City staff to provide wayfinding and signage to ensure legibility and denote routes and regular service information.

Additional service details of the pilot, including schedules and fares, will be announced before June 2026.

Queueing for all dock locations will be managed by on-site YBM staff. Staff will be trained on how to mitigate conflicts by aligning lineups away from the Martin Goodman Trail (Portland Slip and Yonge Slip locations). Potential conflicts at Bidaasige Park will be minimized as the new dock access and queuing area are in a location does not disrupt the design, operations and user experience of the park.

COMMENTS

Rationale for the East-West Water Shuttle Pilot

The [2020 Marine Use Strategy](#) outlines several key priorities for the Inner Harbour. The movement chapter is rooted in a principle of creating “more connections to more destinations”. This means not only making it easier to get people to the water’s edge, but also on, in and over the water. One of the considerations is the importance of proximity and connectivity to existing or planned onshore transit.

Higher level policies in the Council endorsed [Central Waterfront Secondary Plan](#) speak specifically to opportunities around water based regional transportation:

- Promoting a Clean and Green Environment Policy 18: *As part of the strategy to reduce car dependence and shape people’s travel patterns early, a comprehensive range of efficient and competitive transportation alternatives will be provided in tandem with the development of new waterfront communities.*

Similarly, the Council direction in the [Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Plan](#) advanced policies that focus on non-automobile mobility options to complement the enhancements to community facilities, parks and open spaces, and the Community and Cultural Hub and improved water’s edge promenades.

This project also responds to the potential of expanded near term transportation options that improve connections between waterfront neighbourhoods, emerging public attractions and amenities.

As co-leads of the Marine Coordination Committee, the City, Waterfront Toronto and Toronto Port Authority determined that a pilot approach would be the best method to assess the feasibility of expanded east-west marine transportation options. This was due to factors related to the ongoing emergence of land-side attractions and continuing development of housing eastwards along the Central Waterfront and into the Port Lands. The pilot approach allows for adjustments based on data and identified issues, which may include ridership peaks, type of user and potential conflicts between modes. As noted, the pilot project will include collection of detailed ridership data to inform further planning (expected ridership, fare, etc.) feasibility of stop locations, and broader discussions on longer term marine transportation options. At the conclusion of the pilot period, City staff will have access to information that will enable an evaluation of the pilot and of potential impacts to surrounding neighbourhoods to be data driven and evidence based.

Traffic Management in Bathurst Quay

Traffic congestion and safety conflicts between road users are challenges that the Bathurst Quay neighbourhood has experienced throughout recent phases of growth and change in the area and along the waterfront. Vehicle traffic in the neighbourhood is interconnected with traffic patterns on Lake Shore Boulevard West and operations of the intersection of Lakeshore Boulevard West and Bathurst Street. The Martin Goodman Trail passes through the neighbourhood, bringing high volumes of through-trips by cyclists and pedestrians, especially in warmer months.

This pilot represents a comparatively small scale, light touch approach to water transportation. The vessels will not be net new additions to the inner harbour. They are water taxis with 12-person capacity that YBM has otherwise operated on an on-demand schedule at the discretion of the captain. The vessels will pick-up and drop-off passengers from Portland Slip on temporary docks. City-side passenger queuing will be managed by YBM on-site dock management staff together with signage to mitigate potential conflicts. Lineups will flow from south to north at the Portland Slip location to ensure queuing does not obstruct the Martin Goodman Trail. It is the professional opinion of staff that the East-West Water Shuttle is unlikely to significantly exacerbate these known issues.

Water taxi arrival data will be collected in the course of the pilot to gain a precise count of the number of travelers boarding and alighting at Bathurst Quay. The operator of the service is required to collect data to enable the City to evaluate the pilot, including but not limited to ridership numbers and origin/destination information. In addition to the operator data, staff anticipate using other available data to estimate the mode of arrival, and what change it may represent to travel patterns in Bathurst Quay. Datasets that are expected to be used include:

- **Bike Share Toronto ridership data.** Current data shows the Bathurst Street / Queens Quay East station as the 5th most popular destination or 'end' station in the city ([Open Data Toronto 2019-2023](#)).
- **Toronto Island Ferry ridership surveys.** A survey conducted by the City of Toronto in August 2025 found that 73% of arrivals to the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal included a non-automobile mode of transportation. It is currently assumed that the mode of arrival for water taxis is similar to ferries.
- **TTC ridership data.** Average weekday boardings show the 510 Spadina streetcar has the 4th and the 511 Bathurst streetcar as the 7th busiest streetcar routes in the City ([Toronto Transit Commission operating statistics, 2025](#)).

The above data would suggest that the majority of travelers on the water shuttle pilot will arrive by walking, cycling or transit. Recent cycling safety improvements on Dan Leckie Way further enable trips by active modes. The project team assumes that trips to

and from the Portland Slip dock associated with the water shuttle pilot are unlikely to be a substantial generator of automobile trips to Bathurst Quay.

For those who do arrive or depart by vehicle, there is a public surface parking lot on the northeast corner of the intersection of Lake Shore Boulevard West and Bathurst Street as well as lay-by parking space in front of the Harbourfront Community Centre just west of the Portland Slip that is commonly used for pick-up and drop-off associated with the school and community centre as well as other destinations in the area such as the Toronto Music Garden.

Bathurst Quay Transportation Study

At its meeting of February 19, 2026, Toronto and East York Community Council directed staff to undertake a comprehensive multi-modal transportation study and road safety audit of Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood ([Agenda Item History - 2026.TE29.69](#)). This transportation study will review existing and future mobility scenario assumptions and will include data collection.

A report to the Toronto and East York Community Council on findings and recommended next steps from this study is targeted to the third quarter of 2027. A forthcoming report will comment on the planned scope of work for this study as a part of a broader report on the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. This report is expected to be presented to Planning and Housing Committee by the end of the second quarter of 2026.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: East-West Water Shuttle Route

