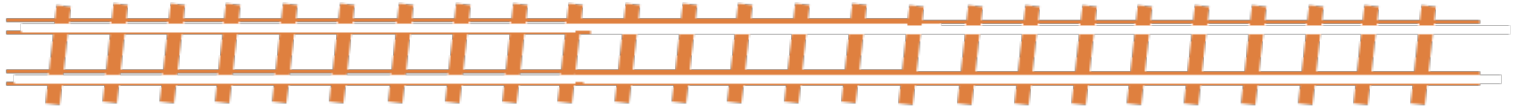


WEST TORONTO RAILPATH EXTENSION



Community Connection Meetings Feedback Summary

June 2019



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1. Introduction

Community connection points from neighbourhood streets to the West Toronto Railpath Extension will offer opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to access the Railpath and enjoy the space for recreation, art, active transportation and more green space. These connection points may also provide community stewardship (i.e. gardening) and programming opportunities (i.e. shared community space).

The City hosted three street focused community meetings to hear from residents with planned connection points on Delaney Crescent (April 15), St. Clarens Avenue and Northern Place (April 16) and Shirley Street (April 17). St. Clarens Avenue and Northern Place street meetings were held together given the proximity of these streets to each other. All streets received a public event notice in the mail two weeks in advance of meeting dates.

This report summarizes the questions and comments received at the meetings and from the feedback forms submitted.

2. Public Event Format and Methods

The purpose of the neighbourhood meetings was to:

- Present design details for community connections
- Listen to concerns and suggestions
- Understand resident preferences for type of connection points (smaller or larger)
- Understand resident priorities for design elements to include

It was also important for the project team to proactively engage with residents who had submitted concerns earlier this year about tree impacts, rationale for connection locations and safety. The final design will consider all community feedback.

Event Format

A presentation first provided background and context about the Railpath Extension followed by a detailed review of renderings and design elements for each street connection point. Attendees were asked to consider:

- What type of connection (trail entrance/exit) is appropriate?
- Which elements to add or change for connections (e.g. landscaping, trees, signage, lighting, benches)

Project team members answered questions and listened to comments, documenting the discussion. Attendees were also requested to provide input by completing feedback forms. Feedback forms could be submitted at the meeting, mailed directly to the City of Toronto or emailed to a dedicated email address (westrailpath@toronto.ca). A summary of the comments received at the meetings and from submitted feedback form follows.

Participation and Feedback

Approximately 12 people signed into the Delaney Crescent meeting and nine feedback forms were submitted.

Approximately 13 people signed into the St. Clarens Avenue and Northern Place meeting with four feedback forms submitted.

No residents attended the Shirley Street meeting.

3. Overall Feedback

Overall, residents who attended both meetings support the West Toronto Railpath Extension from Dundas Street West and Sterling Road to Abell Street and Sudbury Street and look forward to the multi-use trail being built and being able to use it.

From the Delaney Crescent meeting, many but not all residents recommend a larger connection to the Railpath with a variety of elements. Adjacent properties to the connection want special attention given to security and privacy concerns.

From the St. Clarens Avenue and Northern Place meeting, Northern Place residents recommend a smaller, pedestrian only entrance in order to respect the quiet and private character of the street.

What we heard

Below is a summary of key comments received from residents through the communications listed above which has been amalgamated, summarized, and organized by topic.

Delaney Crescent

Connection Type (small or large entrance)

- Most people like the rendering presented and prefer a large opening to connect with Railpath
- Also requests for smaller connection
- Some concern and questions about grading between properties and the Railpath connection as well as questions about the amount of soil removal to anticipate

Preferred Elements

- No benches in order to discourage loitering and late night gathering
- Happy to see Little Free Library will remain and shown in renderings
- Preference for a little native plant garden
- Add "cool" public art
- Consider more trees and a water feature
- Some people like steel bollards while others do not

- Support for all green elements (tree plantings, native plantings, vines, cedar hedge)
- Concern that a cedar hedge might block sunlight into backyards
- Some preference for vines on fences instead of 8 foot cedar trees

Advice and Stewardship Interest

- Ensure winter maintenance of entire connection including the sidewalk that it borders
- Comment that glass walls are ugly and prone to tagging
- People want to be able to see the trains
- Consider Facebook or Instagram so residents can stay informed
- Some residents interested in having a gate from their backyard to Railpath
- Desire for an accessible connection to No Frills
- Interest in learning more about Friends of West Toronto Railpath groups and gardening opportunities
- Consider bird and reptile species in supporting an urban wildlife corridor (e.g. animal sized gaps in the walls to facilitate ability to cross the path)

Northern Place and St. Clarens Avenue

Connection Type (small or large entrance)

- Opposition to trail connection at Northern Place but agreement on a smaller and less pronounced entrance point that is pedestrian only (i.e. bikes would have to dismount here to exit)
- Preference for Northern Place entrance to be positioned in the middle of connection and therefore warranting addition of sidewalk (currently no sidewalk)
- Support provided for a larger trail connection on St. Clarens Avenue

Preferred Elements

- Reduce scale of Northern Place connection and no "super graphics" (large lettering) to indicate street name
- Request for water source at St. Clarens (e.g. fountain, misting area, splash pad) to help with very hot summers
- Focus on green elements rather than public amenities at Northern Place
- Mixed planting elements preferred
- Desperate for shade and doesn't matter if trees are native or non-native
- Interest in planting row of trees along fence line and the back of properties
- Some interest in cedar trees for increased privacy

Advice and Stewardship Interest

- Scale for Northern Place connection needs to reflect small street with small properties
- Ensure safety of kids at play on Northern Place (i.e. corner of street needs speed controls)
- Observation of cars going the wrong way on Northern needs to be addressed and concern that with connection, bikes will now also travel in the wrong direction
- Do not cut down existing trees until construction work actually begins

- Some interest expressed in learning more about types of future stewardship opportunities
- Consider a community holiday tree as focal and/or gathering point at St. Clarens

Additional Topics

Accessibility

- No Frills connection should have a ramp to allow wheelchairs to go up and down
- Reminder that many scooters are used in the neighbourhood
- Railpath needs to also be fully accessible in winter months (i.e. travelling to No Frills from connection points)

Community Connections

- Ensure proper drainage
- Connections need to be safe and clean
- Slow trail traffic down at connection points to reduce conflicts between trail and street users

Lighting

- Ensure lighting doesn't shine into people's windows that are adjacent to trail

Other Design Feature Suggestions

- Water fountains
- Trash and recycling bins
- More shade

Safety:

- Some people feel that some cyclists travel too fast and may be conflict at connection points
- Concern that connection points will attract unwanted and illegal activity (e.g. home break and entry)

Vandalism

- Support for lots of vertical greening to deter tagging on walls and fencing

4. Questions and Answers

The following is a summary of the key questions received at both meetings and responses provided from the project team. The summary is not verbatim. Questions posed by participants are noted with a 'Q,' and answers/responses provided by the project team are represented by an 'A'. General comments are represented by a 'C'.

Delaney Crescent Meeting April 15

Q: Please explain grading required for the connection to the Railpath and how this may affect people's properties.

A: The actual Railpath trail will be graded down to make the connection accessible. Detailed slope elevations are still needed before confirming the amount of soil removal.

Q: Can you confirm that benches will not be integrated at our particular connection?

A: We hear that some neighbors are concerned about loitering and do not want a bench at the connection point. We also have to design for an accessible trail which allows benches for people to rest if needed therefore, areas along the trail will be identified.

Q: How will the Railpath connection point integrate with the road in terms of people coming off and on to Railpath by bike or by walking? The concern here is that the street has a corner with cars coming around and there needs to be clear signage for everyone.

A: In terms of road configuration, we are not changing anything beyond Railpath connection but signage will be provided.

Q: What will it look like behind our homes? Note: we have lost a lot of trees in this area.

A: We are currently showing trees at the access point only because of limited space however, we are still exploring locations for more plantings.

Q: Will the cedars affect my window view?

A: Concern to not limit view noted.

Q: I have a little gate now to go onto the rail corridor and I want to engage with Railpath in the future. I don't want a planned hedge to restrict my access.

A: The original thought by the project team was that people living adjacent to Railpath would want privacy. We've now noted that some people have expressed desire for gate access to Railpath. Consider that given grade differences, personal gates to Railpath may not be feasible. This aspect needs to be further explored.

Q: Will service companies (i.e. roofing, utilities) be able to access our homes?

A: Yes. The City will own the multi-use trail and therefore access possible.

Q: What kind of fence will be used behind homes?

A: A clear view fence which is a metal fence (not chain link) will be used. This fence is usually found around playgrounds and dog parks and you can see through it. Currently used along the existing Railpath.

Q: Will the City of Toronto snow plow and clear the connection and sidewalk? The City needs to be diligent to plow these areas and the sidewalk too. We need confirmation that City will clear the sidewalk beside connection point.

A: The Railpath trail and connection point will be cleared but not the sidewalk.

Q: What is the project timeline?

A: Completion of final design end of 2019. Construction timing depends on funding and coordination with Metrolinx works to widen corridor which means that the earliest construction could start is 2022.

C: *Scott Dobson from Friends of West Toronto Railpath shared experience from the existing Railpath:* The railway corridor divides west end communities but Railpath reverses this affect. Railpath has been amazing for opening up the community, bringing together different users, events, citizen clean up days, as well as good for both businesses and commuters. People also have a community pride about Railpath. The desire for future connections to Railpath spreads to other neighbourhoods like the residents located near Sorauen Park on the west side of the corridor.

Q: How can we access No Frills?

A: Currently the bridge is designed with stairs because an accessible connection (i.e. ramp) would impact the property owner. With a potential future re-development, the City would work with the developer to provide an accessible connection.

C: Requests for a connection point at the more southern location of No Frills parking lot and off Railpath where grading is less of an issue.

Q: Will lights shine into people's homes?

A: The design is according to City guidelines and will not shine into the back of homes. Consideration will be given for special guards on the lights to prevent shining into your windows.

C: Happy to see trees in the drawings. With very small yards, we don't have many trees, and therefore even losing non Native trees is a negative impact. When the trees were cut back years ago the species of birds decreased, and we just started getting them back. Having some form of tree-cover for species that are moving along this area, not just birds, but reptiles, is important. Maybe even watering stations. We need to think about how this path was used by species of animals and providing some cover for them to continue to use this. Consider partnerships with groups like the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Northern Place and St. Clarens Avenue Meeting April 16

Q: When were these connection points to the Railpath Extension first determined?

A: West Toronto Railpath Extension (Phase 2) Environmental Assessment was completed in 2016 and identified connections at each touch point with a public street.

Q: Firstly, everyone is excited about the Railpath and extension. Why are the connections so close together (St. Clarens and Northern Place are literally 10 houses apart)? Northern Place is a small, one-way street that won't be used much and we don't mind going around the corner for access.

A: City is adhering to Official Plan policies and is mandated to connect existing roads to active transportation routes and public green space.

Q: Who did you consult with during the Environmental Assessment?

A: Everyone in study area was notified and this area is bounded by Dundas St. W. Lansdowne Ave., King St. and Dufferin St. Regarding the connection points specifically, City staff heard back from Delaney Crescent residents.

C: Northern Place connection is dangerous because it will bring more traffic onto a street where many children play. Also concerned that cyclists will exit connection and ride the wrong way on the street.

A: City can address wrong way cycling. There is also an option to narrow trail access so that all users slow down to get through.

C: Northern Place connection is a waste of time and money. We don't want it. We don't want the traffic and the danger. I am also concerned about people bringing their cars into area and parking on this street to use Railpath.

C: Suggestion to place bench on the side of Railpath closest to the noise wall to avoid conflict with passing trail users and entrance point.

Q: Can you slow down trail traffic at connection points?

A: There will be mixing zones with the intent to slow trail traffic at these points e.g. not continuing solid line down the middle of the trail through connection point area and providing warning sign on the approach.

Q: Will connections be accessible?

A: Yes. Legally accessible means less than a 5% grade.

Q: Were there any lessons learned from glass noise walls from existing Railpath because renderings show same design?

A: A combination of clear panels with concrete bottom was chosen to allow for transparency e.g. providing people with light and ability to see passing train. To deter tagging, plastic laminate film will be installed that can easily be replaced. Vines on fences are another way to discourage tagging.

Q: I'm curious to see and understand how the community connection rendering shown interacts with individual properties. What is happening directly behind our property lines (chain fences, plantings)?

A: Behind properties will be private property fence, then a clear view City fence (metal) and then the plantings. The clear view fence is on the Railpath side. We are considering planting vines and/or cedar hedge for privacy concerns. Evergreens could also help keep foliage throughout the year.

Q: Will the City take out the chain link fence they currently put up behind my yard?

A: Yes and replace it with clear view fence.

C: Both St. Clarens and Northern Place entrances directly affect our property. Our main concerns include:

1. Safety of our children who play on Northern Place. It's a beautiful spot that our community loves and is a big part of our identity. This private nook is a reason that I bought my property.
2. Trees at the connection provide the only shade in our area. This will be a huge loss.
3. Recommend girdles to be installed on the lights to focus light and minimize pollution.
4. Given proximity of other connection points, Northern Place connection is not needed. We are losing a common community element. There is a woman who has maintained the garden for 40 years. It's a shame to lose an area that the community is already stewarding. I'm willing to work with the City but you need our social license to construct this.

A: In terms of safety of children, important to consider that this connection will connect kids safely to active transportation, linear park, community amenities, and larger trail network (e.g. Davenport Greenway trail). Regarding trees, due to the trail alignment and grading requirements, the trees will have to be removed. These trees will be impacted whether there is a connection point or not.

Q: Is the rendering for Northern Place a larger or smaller connection option?

A: Different treatment options can be considered to make it smaller more quiet connection. We can work through design and based on what we are hearing tonight: change scale, no super graphics (large street sign lettering); less amenities and more greenery; etc.

Q: What options are available instead of waiting for a large tree to grow many years? We need greenery in this area with high shrubs.

A: We will take feedback from tonight and incorporate into design. Considerations include:

- More tree plantings between the Railpath and property fences
- Row of trees behind properties (removing proposed cedar hedges)
- Large deciduous native trees (take years to grow) which will not provide privacy but shade and drop leaves for 6 months of the year
- Canopy trees (14 feet tall when planted and grow about a foot a year) would shade back yards and Railpath
- City tree planting program (noting that small yards in area)

C: Comments that Cedar tree better for privacy (adjacent to entrance) and may be better for people with no backyards.

Q: What will a smaller connection point look like?

A: We can consider sidewalk treatments and increased planting up throughout. Consider extending sidewalk for pedestrian only access. Take out the plaza. Have the solid line in the middle of trail to indicate slowing down. The fence would narrow the entrance to 2.1 m. Still leave room for a garden and still have cedar hedges and a fence. The vines could continue right through.

Q: Is no connection through Northern Place an option?

A: Correct. Staff cannot make a recommendation against the cities policies and Official Plan.

C: In terms of providing temporary access to the No Frills, it is my opinion that all options for an accessible connection have not been fully exhausted yet. We are still working with Councillor's office to ensure at-grade access whether or not site is developed in future.

C: Important to consider access to trail and No Frills in the winter. I could not get to No Frills this past winter. It's not just a question about how to make connections AODA compliant. We also have to think about weather impacts and how people need to move throughout the city and in all conditions.

Q: What happens next?

A: Project team will work on revising design for smaller connection for Northern Place and review revisions with residents in June.

Q: When is construction expected to begin?

A: Currently WTRE design is funded by the City and other levels of governments which will be finalized end of 2019. Earliest potential start for construction is 2022 because works need to be coordinated with Metrolinx. Currently no dedicated funding in place for construction but the City will explore alternate funding from federal and provincial governments. If no funding is available from alternate sources, the City will fund construction of WTRE internally.

5. Conclusions

Residents clearly indicated interest in being involved in the design process and providing input into how Railpath connections will interface with their streets. There is both enthusiasm for project and concern related to the changing street condition. With respect to the concerns raised by Northern Place residents, the project team will work on revising the designs to better represent a smaller scale entrance with less elements and present the revised design to residents this summer.

Over the coming months, the project team will work towards the final design for the overall Railpath Extension. We will also be heading back to the Design Review Panel in September, 2019. You can learn more about this process from the [Design Review Panel webpage](#).

There will also be large public event taking place later this year to present the final design. You can find out more about these upcoming events by subscribing to the project email list from the website: www.toronto.ca/westrailpath

Thank you for being involved!