



West Toronto Railpath Extension Detailed Design Key Stakeholder Meeting #2 - Summary

Meeting Date: Tuesday June 25, 2019

Location: George Chuvalo Community Centre, 50 Sousa Mendes Street

Present:

Adrian Martins, Councillor Ana Bailão Ward 9 Davenport
Victoria Taylor, DeRAIL Platform for Art + Architecture
Scott Dobson, Friends of West Toronto Railpath
Sylvan Mably, Cycle Toronto Ward 9
Alex Mather, Cycle Toronto Ward 10, 11
Robert Zaichkowski, Cycle Toronto Ward 4
Doug Bennett, Friends of Sorauren Park,
Richard Aaron, Nature Knowledge
Kathleen Law, Pollinator Partnership

Regrets:

Roger Brook, Walk Toronto
Todd Hofley, Liberty Village Residents Association
Joey Swartz, TBN, CAN-Bike Instructor

Project Team:

Saikat Basak, City of Toronto – Cycling Infrastructure & Programs
Erika Richmond, City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation
Tina Fernandes, City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation
Deanne Mighton, City of Toronto – Urban Design
Farhiya Aden, City of Toronto - Public Consultation Unit
Maogosha Pyjor, City of Toronto – Public Consultation Unit
Francesco Addario, Hatch
Jenny Myung, Hatch
Lei Chang, Forrec
Shan Yang, Forrec
Shannon Wiley, Montgomery Sisam
Teik Lim, Metrolinx
Danesh Chaudhary, Metrolinx
Stefany Stadnyk, Metrolinx

Purpose

Report on work completed to date with update on 60% design details followed by discussion.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Project Update:
 - a. Integrated Public Art Plan (recap October 26, 2018) and Making for Placemaking (Activation April 3-7, 2019) Presentation by Victoria Taylor (DeRAIL)
 - b. Design Review Panel (recap November 21, 2018)
 - c. Metrolinx Corridor Expansion
 - d. SmartTrack + GO station design
3. Overview of 60 % Design Details – North to South
 - a. Site plan review with Landscape Architecture, Elements and Planting Typologies
 - b. North & South tie-ins (i.e. Plazas)
 - c. Bridge Structures
 - d. No Frills Connection Update
 - e. Community Connections and resident feedback
 - f. Property Impact Meetings
4. Next Steps: Schedule and Funding
5. Questions & Discussion

Overall Feedback

- Opportunity to animate (public art), celebrate (events), and generate awareness that more Railpath is coming while construction details and coordination with Metrolinx is worked out
- Accessible connection (ramp, at grade access point) from the Barrie Corridor Rail Bridge to No Frills is a must and stairs only is not acceptable
- Integrated art plan needed for entire Railpath (existing and extension)
- Long term planting/maintenance strategy with community engagement regarding stewardship opportunities
- Wabash Community Centre RFP has been issued and making a connection to Sorauren Park via Barrie Corridor Bridge needs coordination between WRTE and Wabash C.C. teams
- All bridges should feature West Toronto Railpath name to continue brand and bring awareness to everyone whether they are on Railpath or not
- Signage needs to be consistent, provide planting information, and direct people to community connections
- Concern and frustration with lack of construction timelines for building extension

Submission

- Letter received from Friends of West Toronto Railpath, July 8, 2019 (*see Appendix*)

Questions and Discussion

The discussion captured is summarized below and categorized by themes. 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'.

Trail Design

Q: How will cyclists know to slow down at community connection points and what treatment will be used?

A: The connection points will be designed as different crossing points (slow down zones). Trail users will be alerted that it is a shared space. Visual cues (i.e. with different pavement surface like concrete or pavers and pavement markings) will be added in order to inform and promote safety.

Q: How wide will the trail be at narrower sections?

A: Generally the trail will be 3.5 metres wide with exception of under Dundas St. Bridge which will be just over 3 metres.

Metrolinx Projects

Re-alignment Project for Existing Railpath:

C: Metrolinx's fourth track expansion of Kitchener GO Corridor will impact existing Railpath and require trail re-alignment. This work is behind schedule. The Councillor and community are frustrated about timeline, accountability and process. There is an upcoming community meeting in September to discuss status of this project which needs to be run by community with both City and Metrolinx present. In the meantime, existing Railpath requires maintenance and is overrun with dog-strangling vines (invasive weed).

Q: When can we expect the project to start?

A: The City is working with Metrolinx and the designs for realignment of trail are nearing completion.

Post meeting note: Based on the latest information from Metrolinx, construction is expected to start in Summer 2020 which may last for two years to complete.

Q: Who is responsible for the Railpath realignment contract? More broadly, there needs to be a better understanding of who is in charge of what elements (existing, extension Railpath)?

A: Metrolinx Kitchener Corridor team is responsible for construction of the early works rail corridor expansion. The Railpath is in detailed design phase and City staff are working on securing the funding for the construction contract. From the City, Parks, Forestry & Recreation staff are leading design review and coordination. City and Metrolinx are working on forming the team for the next phase of the construction administration.

Coordination for Railpath Extension:

Q: How is the design and installation of noise walls being coordinated with Railpath extension design and implementation?

A: Design for the noise walls is complete. Response from Metrolinx is that improvements can still be made to design of noise walls.

Q: Given the current conflicts on the existing Railpath, how will shared space function between Railpath users and Metrolinx maintenance vehicles e.g. Shirley Street access point?

A: Removable bollards may be one solution to consider.

Bridges

C: West Toronto Railpath text should be painted on all bridges (i.e. Bloor Street Bridge) and in block letters. If the structure limits placement of text, consider providing on the existing structure (i.e. Lansdowne Bridge). This will help acknowledge Railpath to people (drivers, pedestrians, local residents) that may not be on Railpath (i.e. project identifier and brand).

C: With current design renderings shown, north side of Lansdowne Bridge seems more prone to graffiti than more open south side.

Q: What will the bridge surface be made of?

A: Asphalt.

Q: Why does No Frills/Choice Properties now support an accessible connection from the Barrie Rail Corridor Bridge to No Frills location?

A: During initial environmental assessment process, potential property impact concerns from No Frills resulted in design with stair connection. Following EA and most recent communications, local Councillor and Friends of West Toronto Railpath have promoted benefits and requirements of an accessible, at grade connection. City staff have also met with property owners and management to present future pedestrian and cycling volumes with an accessible connection. An accessible connection (ramp) will entail a larger impact and footprint. Currently, City is in negotiations with owners and property management in order to retain the permits rights.

Sorauren Park

C: The Wabash Community Centre facility is a \$40 million dollar project taking place at Sorauren Park. The City has issued a formal Request for Proposals for architectural services. There is a lot of community talk, excitement and expectation for a future connection to Railpath via the Barrie Corridor Bridge. Getting the landing point at Sorauren Park will be critical because the area is constrained. Coordination required between both WTRE design and Wabash C.C. teams.

Signage

Q: What is the plan for signage?

C: The team will be following Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy and Toronto Parks and Trails Wayfinding Strategy. Agreement that a consistent approach is necessary. More details about signage will be provided at the next public event later this year.

C: Ensure signs inform about plantings and guide public to the access points/community connections.

Plantings and Maintenance

Q: Who will be responsible for plantings?

A: Construction contractor hired by the City will be responsible for a three year maintenance. Contractor would be advised on which plants to use. After contract, potential for stewardship opportunities with Friends of West Toronto Railpath. C: There seems to be an assumption that Friends is available to steward.

C: Native planting approach needs to be planned in advance in order to get it right (custom ecotypes, right stage of maturity, potentially collecting seeds). Different plants require different conditions.

Q: Could we source the plants from existing Railpath Phase 1?

C: That might be more trouble, since the plants must reach the right stage of maturity before they can be planted.

Fun

Q: What can we do now to activate the space? Try not to get bogged down by challenges and timing which frustrates people and turns them off. How can we celebrate what is coming to encourage interest and buy-in?

C: Suggestion and enthusiasm to have a party in the fall on Dufferin section of trail which is complete with connection to Pessoa Park.

Funding

Q: How has the 11 million Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) funding been used for Railpath Extension?

A: The City has applied \$2.9 million of the funding received from the federal government towards the design for the West Toronto Railpath Extension. The remaining funds will help cover other transportation infrastructure and cycling projects in the city.

Q: Are we owed money for the Railpath in that case?

A. No. Timeline for federal funding is March 2020 and no funding exists after the above deadline.

Construction and Schedule

Q: What is the fastest way to get the Railpath extension built (versus building north to south)?

A: The City is working with Metrolinx on staging options and it could possibly begin from different directions.

Q: Where will Metrolinx staging area be?

A: One staging area will be at 1875 Dundas St. W which Metrolinx recently purchased and which will be a connection to WTRE later.

Q: Can the barrier and gradient not be laid down by 2020?

A: At this time, cannot confirm the schedule. City is working with Metrolinx how to expedite construction of WTRE.

Appendix: Friends of West Toronto Railpath Letter, July 8, 2019



8 July 2019

60% Feedback_Design Process West Toronto Railpath Extension (WTRE)

Compiled by Friends of WTR Stewardship Committee:

Scott Dobson

Kent Elson

Kathleen Law

Victoria Taylor

To : Maogosha, Public Coordinator for WTRE Project, City of Toronto

The Friends of WTR are pleased to be part of the stakeholder review process for WTRE.

Based on our two decades of collective involvement in the conception, community engagement, use and stewardship of this unique public linear landscape, car-free mobility and green infrastructure corridor, we offer qualified insight into the review of the 60% design of the WTRE plans provided by the design team including the City of Toronto, Metrolinx, Forrec, Hatch and Montgomery Sisam.

Below we provide input on improvements to the design concept visioning as well as specific feedback on planting and design.

Our Critical Feedback (see below) is driven by three high level visioning points:

1. That the design vision and construction implementation of WTRE will inspire the public to think differently about the renovation of unused urban spaces and as well the planting design of these types of semi-public spaces;
2. That WTRE phase 2 and WTR phase 1 evolve into an integrated landscape that enhance public mobility and experience by visitors and the adjacent railpath community through well considered planting design, artworks and well built, safe hardscapes and accessible infrastructures;
3. That the design team will ensure that the planting and hardscape designs can be properly maintained beyond contractor warranty given current (predicted) Parks operations budget.
4. That the planting plan focused on (1) maintainability and (2) ecological benefits to pollinators, complex food webs, and climate change.

With the ongoing decline of public landscape maintenance and the advent of new social and environmental movements, the WTR is a place to think differently both about how we move through the city along a linear landscape, how we turn unused urban spaces into opportunities for placemaking, community and culture, and how the planting scheme can reflect and emphasize a new vision for naturalistic urban hardy planting within the reality of Parks operations budgets while inspiring the public with new ideas for public plantings that are visually interesting, provide habitat and move away from the traditional horticultural planting style of most public parks.

The WTR landscape can be inspired by, designed and operated within the framework and principles of contemporary naturalistic planting in urban landscapes. These design and stewardship principles are included in the Friends' of WTR August 2017 Stewardship Plan (attached as separate document) and were inspired by the work of Douglas Tallamy, professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. We include a quote:

"We must abandon the notion that humans and nature cannot live together. Though vital as short-term refuges, nature preserves are not large enough to meet our ecological needs so we must restore the natural world where we live, work, and play. To succeed we need to redesign [public] landscapes to

- 1) support diverse pollinator populations and complex food webs,*
- 2) store carbon, and*
- 3) manage our watersheds.*

... But plants differ widely in how well they support wildlife. Native plants support pollinators and food webs far better than introduced ornamentals, and some native plants support much more life than others. Choosing the best plants for your area is the key to success. "

-- Source, D. Tallamy www.bringingnaturehome.net/

Friends of WTR Critical Feedback on 60% Design Review:

1. The stakeholders meeting did not have anybody from Parks Operations. The Friends feel that the future management/maintenance of the trail is as important as its design and the final planting design must relate to realistic Parks Operations knowledge and budgets. They need to be involved in this process.
2. It was suggested at the meeting that Friends or community groups could take care of pollinators sections along the new Railpath. This was news to us. If Friends of WTR are invited/ required to maintain certain areas we would need funding. Designs cannot assume that Friends or other groups will be able to maintain plants.
3. The Friends Stewardship plan for the WTR (phs1) could be adopted as the plan for phase 2. Friends invested a lot of time coming up with this plan that includes suggestions for "best practices" for permits.
4. The 60% WTRE planting and design must relate to the current design of WTR and evolve into one continuous and experiential landscape. The metal garden fences at the nodes have appeared out of nowhere and feel out of place in the larger Railpath vision. These fences have also appeared in the Railpath alignment plans too. They seem at odds with the original wild vision for Railpath. Rather

than installing metal fences we would rather that attention and money be spent on making the green walls on the sound walls be as resilient and successful as possible.

5. It would be great if all of the new bridges featured the "West Toronto Railpath" name and using the same branding on font that Bloor and Dupont bridges already have. The orange colour is great but the naming will really help people see that Railpath is a continuous connected active transit route.
6. We feel that an at-grade entrance to the Railpath is a must for the No Frills site and our experience is that their parking lot is almost never full. Not even close. To succeed Railpath needs to be usable by all users.
7.
 - A) The stairs only option will preclude a large number of users who will not be able to carry their bike and/or trailer and/or children with bikes down and then up stairs. This will lead to bikes being chained at the top of the stairs which will create other safety issues.
 - B) Users who want an at grade access point will be tempted to exit at Shirley street and try to cross over Lansdowne. This is not only poor design but really dangerous. We absolutely dont want to encourage people to do this. The entire idea of RailPath is to avoid this kind of situation.
 - C) The property will be developed and at that time the City will have more leverage but properties along the corridor have often sat for 10 years after the initial application to redevelop went in. In some cases land was untouched for 25 years. We have no real idea when this property will be developed and the public should not have to wait years to find out.
 - D) It is worth noting that an at-grade access point would cost a fraction of what the stairs are going to cost.
 - E) It should be pointed out that at every stakeholder meeting going back to 2014 stakeholders have made a clear preference for having an at grade access point to the No-Frills site.
8. Community entry nodes must have consistent WTR orientation signage (not just the name of that one entry) and also to be consistent with City of Toronto signage.
9. All WTR signage must be updated to include reference to each community node as well as each characteristic planting zone to enhance public understanding of the different planting communities. Most users don't understand the plant part of Railpath because there is nothing telling them anything about it.
10. Planting plan must include a diversity of urban hardy, native trees and shrubs and to select trees that integrate well with the tree planting that exists in WTR phase 1.
11. We would like to see drinking fountains along the route, similar to what was put in at Wallace entry. We have not seen any evidence of them. What is the plan for them?
12. All new perennial planting areas are planted with nursery grown plants to ensure success . Best to secure the sourcing well in advance in time to get the quality and quantity needed. and ensure a dedicated watering regime is maintained until they are established (timeframe tbd). As this will be a large custom order the City should work in advance with a local nursery for contracted growing. This could be a year in advance.

13. Public artworks should be curated to be place specific and enhance the public experience of the site. Artworks should move beyond static permanent installations to embrace the idea of new genre public art with temporary pop ups, seasonal performances. We would like to see an integrated public art plan for the entire WTR corridor to emphasize the space as a place to move through as well as a place to pause. We would like to see artworks that explore the indigenous context of the site.
14. While it was good to have Metrolinx engineers at the stakeholder meeting we really need to have somebody from Metrolinx who can speak to policy and timeline questions. In the past this was Anthony Irving.
15. We remain concerned that there seems to be no deadline or completion date for this project. We understand that infrastructure projects often get delayed but we feel that having a deadline would aid in pushing things forward and keeping the public engaged.

We are looking forward to inviting all the stakeholders and public to a get-together/event in September 2019 to celebrate what has been achieved so far and to create excitement for the much anticipated West Toronto Railpath expansion. See you there!

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.
