YongeTOmorrow Round Three Consultation: Online Project Briefing – Transcript

Video can be found at toronto.ca/yongeTOmorrow

Johanna Kyte, Transportation Services, City of Toronto

[00:00] Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the proposed plans for Yonge Street! The City of Toronto has been studying ways to increase pedestrian space and improve the way people move through and experience Yonge Street between College/Carlton Street and Queen Street.

[00:15] Thanks to public feedback, we now have a plan which prioritizes pedestrians, provides more protection for cyclists and maintains access for transit, parking, deliveries and ride hailing. *Please note images in this presentation were created before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic.*

[00:36] Today you will be hearing from three members of the design team. I am Johanna Kyte, the Project Manager from the City of Toronto. I am also joined by Peter Piet and Andy Barker from Steer Group who will walk you through the details of the design concept.

[00:51] YongeTOmorrow is a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA). This is a planning process under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act. It provides the framework for municipalities to plan, design and construct infrastructure projects. Round Three of consultation seeks your feedback on how the recommended design concept supports the priorities identified for Yonge street in Round One and Round Two of consultation. Your feedback will inform the plans presented to City Council for consideration in December.

[01:22] Over the past seven months, COVID-19 has changed how many Torontonians use and prioritize space on city streets. Under the direction of Council, lane closures and other changes to city streets have been installed as part of the ActiveTO, CaféTO and CurbTO programs to support social distancing.

[01:43] The City of Toronto is monitoring these temporary installations to identify challenges and opportunities short and long term. YongeTOmorrow has also asked stakeholders how their use of the street and priorities have changed in 2020 and has considered that feedback.

[2:01] The YongeTOmorrow study continues to evaluate concepts by considering the needs of people using the street today and many years from now in a post-pandemic future. Both short and long term YongeTOmorrow supports:

- More space for people walking and biking;
- More space for outdoor cafés, vending and retail;
- Improving equity and experience for those who walk, roll, cycle and take transit; and
- Public space for residents in the core with less access to parks and private outdoor spaces.

[2:33] The study area extends from Roxborough Street in the north to King Street in the south and from University Avenue or Avenue Road in the west to Jarvis Street in the east. The study area is a geographic boundary data collection and consultation. YongeTOmorrow EA is the first phase of study and the focus area is evaluating design concepts on Yonge Street from College/Carleton Streets to Queen Street. A second EA, or phase 2will start after YongeTOmorrow to study design concept son Yonge Street from Davenport Road to College/Carleton Street.

[3:08] Before we get into the design concept, let's do a quick recap of the key drivers informing the YongeTOmorrow study.

[03:15] State of Good Repair – The 100-year-old watermain beneath Yonge Street and the road constructed in the 1950s will soon need replacing. This construction provides an opportunity to consider a new street design to better serve everyone.

[03:31] Mode Shift – more people are choosing to walk, cycle and take transit than ever before. Between 1996 and 2006 the number of people walking for trips in Toronto had doubled to 24% while driving had decreased to 17%.

[03:47] Mode Share – based on the City's intersection counts the majority of people using Yonge Street are walking, cycling or taking transit. Pedestrians alone make up 50-75% of the people using Yonge Street.

[04:00] Growth – the current population and employment in the downtown core are expected to double by 2031. This means we can expect even more pedestrians on the street.

[04:12] City Policy – the City's Official Plan identifies Yonge Street as a Cultural Corridor and a Priority Retail Street that should be improved for walking, transit use, cycling, and social gathering, with space for seating, cafes and greening.

[04:28] Safety – YongeTOmorrow supports the Vision Zero Road Safety Action Plan to prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users by:

- Adding protected space for walking and cycling; and
- Reducing the number of driving lanes, driving speeds, car and truck volumes, street corner radii, and crossing distances.

[04:49] Equity – there is a need to provide better transportation choices and experiences for all who walk, roll, cycle, and take transit and provide more public space for downtown residents. The City of Toronto is committed to building a transportation that considers the needs of all groups regardless of race, class, ability or any difference and acknowledges that not everyone starts out with the same opportunities and mobility choices.

[05:16] Now let's recap the study process and how we got to Round Three of consultation.

[05:22] At Public Event #1, 15 possible street design options and a set of evaluation criteria were developed. There were 3 consistent themes among stakeholder priorities:

- The pedestrian experience;
- Businesses and tourism; and
- Street flexibility

[05:40] The long list of 15 street design options were evaluated and a short List of three street design options emerged as best meeting the project objectives. They were:

- Pedestrian Priority;
- One Way Driving Access; and
- Two Way Driving Access.

The short list of street design options recommended that a separated cycling facility be located on a parallel street. Bay Street, Church Street and University Avenue were identified for a cycling facility feasibility assessment.

[06:10] The priorities along Yonge Street vary based on the adjacent properties and how people use the street to access them. Public Event #2 presented the four Alternative Solutions which were developed by applying one of the three street design options (Pedestrian Priority, One Way Access or Two-Way Access) to each block of Yonge Street based on its local needs. Alternative #4 with cycling facilities on University Avenue was identified as the preliminary preferred alternative.

[06:40] In Round One and Two of consultation, over 6,000 online survey responses were received. Over 50 individual meetings were also held with key stakeholders. After Round Two the key themes heard were:

- Pedestrian experience is the top priority;
- Increased consideration for cycling, deliveries and ride hailing is desired;
- Maintain space for patios and street retail; and
- Consider a phased implementation.

[07:10] the Alternative #4 pedestrian priority zones, especially the section between Edward Street and Dundas Square, received a lot of public support. Comments were mixed on the other blocks which incorporated driving access.

[07:25] All alternatives were modelled to understand the increase in average driving delay in 2031:

- Alternative #1 had the lowest delays and the lowest level of improvement for people walking, cycling and enjoying the street.
- Alternative #2 and #3 scored the highest on most project objectives, except driving where the delays were much higher.
- Alternative #4 provided significant improvements to the street experience and much lower delays than Alternative #2 or #3. The highest delays in Alternative #4 were about 90 seconds.

[07:58] Round Two feedback and modelling results confirmed Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative Solution. It best addressed the project objectives and the diversity of stakeholder priorities. Feedback also indicated that more consideration was needed for cycling, loading, deliveries and ride hailing.

[08:20] Keeping the feedback about cycling and more driving access to support businesses in mind, Alternative #4 was then developed into three Design Concepts. Design Concepts are different ways to implement and operate Alternative #4.

[08:35] We received a lot of questions about the pedestrian priority zones in Alternative #4 during Round #2. Before we explain the design concepts, let's take a couple of minutes to address some the most frequently asked questions.

[08:50] "*What is a pedestrian priority zone?"* This is an area dedicated to walking and cycling where motor vehicles are restricted during the daytime from 6am to 1am.

[09:00] "*Do I need to dismount my bike in a pedestrian priority zone?"* No! Cycling that yields to pedestrians is encouraged in pedestrian priority zones.

[09:10] "*Will there be a dedicated space for "pedestrians only" in pedestrian priority zones??"* Yes! There will be traditional sidewalks next to the buildings on each side of pedestrian priority zones for pedestrians only. These sidewalk areas will be elevated from the pedestrian priority area by a rolled curb and tactile paving strip.

[09:30] "*Can cars and trucks drive in the pedestrian priority zones overnight?"* Yes! From 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. buses will share the road with cars and trucks.

[09:41] "*What about Emergency Services?"* Access gates and curbs have been designed in consultation with Fire, Police and Paramedics to ensure access is maintained for Emergency Service vehicles.

[09:54] "*Are any lanes on east-west streets closed?"* No! Access is maintained across Yonge Street for all east – west streets and transit lines.

[10:05] "*How will I park or access a Yonge Street property?"* Access to all existing driveways, loading docks, laneways and parking garages have been maintained. You can also be dropped off within 50 metres of any front door on Yonge Street.

[10:20] "What about the buses on Yonge Street?" The daytime bus route would be discontinued or rerouted. The night bus and subway replacement shuttle service would not be impacted.

[10:33] "*How do deliveries happen in pedestrian priority zones?"* Three ways: rear loading docks and laneways, curbside activity zones on side streets; and overnight.

Peter Piet, Urban Design & Landscape, Steer Group

[10:45]**:** Hello, Peter here. I am going to walk you through the design concepts.

[10:51] This summary shows how different operations have been applied by block during the day to form the three design concepts: overnight, from 1am to 6am, there would be two-way driving access for all buses, cars and trucks from College Street to Queen Street for all of the blocks and for all of the concepts. All concepts would also include a cycle track on University Avenue from College Street to Adelaide Street.

- 4a provides the most pedestrian priority and the least driving access. A short two-way local access would be provided between Gould Street and Edward Street to service loading docks. There are more turn restrictions, and fewer curbside activity zones to allow more spaces for cafés, seating and greening.
- 4b has two pedestrian priority zones flanked by two-way local driving access. It has the least turn restrictions, the most dedicated turn lanes, and the most curbside activity zones.
- 4c has two pedestrian priority zones flanked by one-way local driving access. It also adds a cycle track from College Street to Gerrard. This option balances the priorities of people walking, cycling, taking transit and accessing local properties by car or truck. It has been identified as the recommended design concept.

[12:19] Although operations vary, the road width, curbs, and paving materials are the same from College Street to Queen Street to create a consistent look and feel. By flanking each pedestrian priority zone with one-way streets, access is maintained, but traffic volumes are kept low to create a pedestrian friendly environment very similar to

the pedestrian priority zones all the way from Gerrard Street to Shuter Street. Let's have a look at each block in more detail.

[12:50] College Street to Gerrard Street features two-way driving access with cycle tracks. Cycle tracks have been added to the recommendation for this block because it has a wider right-of-way, lower pedestrian volumes, higher vehicle volumes and provides links to the existing cycling network. Unit paving, a 30km/h speed limit and no through travel south of Gerrard Street during the day will calm traffic.

[13:19] 4C also provides curbside activity areas on both sides of the street because there is a lot of ride hailing and deliveries. A signalized pedestrian crossing would connect College Park and the McGill Street Parkette. There would be wide sidewalks and furnishing zones to support cafés, planting and seating.

[13:42] Gerrard Street to Walton Street features one-way driving access. Northbound local access has been added to this block during the day to provide more support for deliveries and ride hailing on Walton Street and Yonge Street.

[13:58] The volume and speed of vehicles using this block would be very low to support a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. The character of this section would be similar to the pedestrian priority zones.

[14:11] Walton Street to Elm Street features pedestrian priority zone. This recommendation for this block stayed the same because it has high pedestrian volumes and more development is planned. Gates will close the road from 6am to 1am and open overnight to allow access for buses, cars and trucks.

[14:30] Sidewalks on each side of the road would remain for pedestrians only and are flanked by furnishing zones to support cafés, planting and seating. Curbside activity zones are provided on Elm street to allow space for deliveries and ride hail during the day.

[14:48] Elm Street to Edward Street features one-way driving access – local southbound access was added to the recommendation for this block during the day to provide more support for deliveries, ride hailing and to service loading docks fed from Gould Street. The volume and speed of vehicles using this block will be very low to support a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. The northbound lane won't have any cars or trucks during the day and can be used for cycling.

[15:19] Drivers will travel eastbound on Elm Street to enter Yonge Street and exit by travelling west on Edward Street. Gould Street remains two-way to support laneway operations. Curbside activity areas are provided on Edward Street and Elm Street to allow space for deliveries and ride hail. Wide sidewalks and furnishing zones to support cafes, planting and seating remain.

[15:45] Edward Street to Dundas Street & Dundas Street to Dundas Sq. would feature pedestrian priority zones. These blocks stayed the same because they have the highest

pedestrian volumes, high east-west pedestrian traffic and special events. Gates will close the road from 6am to 1am and open overnight to allow access or buses, cars and trucks. Cycling that yields to pedestrians is encouraged along the closed roadway. Sidewalks on each side of the road will remain for pedestrians only and are flanked by furnishing zones to support cafes, planting and seating.

[16:29] Curbside activity zones are provided on Edward Street and Dundas Square to allow space for deliveries and pick-up/drop-off during the day. Pedestrians would be able to cross east-west anytime so the scramble phase will be eliminated from the Yonge-Dundas intersection. This will improve east-west travel times on Dundas Street for transit riders and drivers.

[16:54] Dundas Square to Shuter Street features one-way driving access. This recommendation for this block stayed the same, providing northbound local access and lots of curbside activity space on the east side. This is because this block has the most ride hailing and tour-bus use supporting tourism and entertainment activities. This block also provides access to Green P parking on Dundas Square. The southbound lane would not have any cars or trucks during the day and can be used for cycling.

[17:28] The operation of Shuter Street as a two-way street, Dundas Square (eastbound only), and O'Keefe Lane (northbound only) would remain unchanged. Wide sidewalks and furnishing zones to support cafes, planting and seating remain.

[17:45] Shuter Street to Queen Street features would have two-way driving access. This block stayed the same because two-way driving access connects parking garages and tourism sites to major routes in/out of the downtown, limiting traffic congestion. This block also has lower pedestrian volumes. Curbside activity zones would be provided to support properties without rear access and pick-up/drop-off for the theatre.

[18:14] Wide sidewalks and furnishing zones to support cafes, planting and seating remain. Turning right out of the Eaton Centre parking garage will be allowed and the traffic signal would allow pedestrians to cross first. Turn restrictions would be maintained at the Queen Street and Yonge Street intersection, with increased space for pedestrians.

[18:40] To manage driving access aautomated gates are recommended to limit vehicle access to pedestrian priority zones during the day. The gates will be wide enough to visually discourage drivers, while allowing emergency services and people cycling to pass. Gates would open overnight to allow access for the night bus service and can also be opened in the event of subway closures.

[19:03] It is recommended that the lighting on Yonge Street be simplified by combining pedestrian and vehicular lights on the same pole. This will allow the number of poles on the sidewalk to be significantly reduced. Light poles should be relocated to the new curb edge.

[19:22] Mountable curbs are recommended to elevate pedestrian only sidewalks from the pedestrian priority, two-way driving access and one-way driving access areas that will also be used by buses overnight. A tactile paving strip will indicate the edge of the sidewalk to people with low or no vision.

Andy Barker, Civil Engineering, Steer Group

[19:44] Thanks Peter. Hello, Andy Barker here. I am going to walk you through the impacts and the evaluation results that will be associated with the recommended design concept 4c.

[19:55] More consideration for cycling has been added to the recommended design concept by providing a cycle track on Yonge Street between College Street and Gerrard Street. Cycling would be permitted along the full length of Yonge Street, between College Street and Queen Street, including the pedestrian priority zones. On blocks with one way driving access, cyclists would share the space as well as being permitted in the lane in the opposing direction. Eliminating through traffic and reducing driving lanes on Yonge Street means that it will feel more like a local street. People cycling will benefit from the reduced vehicle volumes and speeds. Because of the high pedestrian volumes, frequent events, and tourism sites sharing the limited space on Yonge Street south of Gerrard Street, a separated, high volume, cycling facility is recommended on University Avenue from College Street to Adelaide Street.

[20:59] Design concept 4C recommends reducing driving access on Yonge Street from current conditions. The impacts to driving across the neighbourhood have been estimated using a traffic simulation model. The graphs show how long it would take to drive north or south between College Street and Queen Street during the afternoon rush hour. The bars compare driving times between right now, in 2031, and in 2031 if design concept 4C were implemented. The highest impacts are seen in the northbound direction on Bay Street and Church Street which have increases of 90 seconds and 120 seconds respectively.

[21: 40] This graph shows how long it would take to drive east or west between University Avenue and Jarvis Street in the afternoon rush hour. Impacts to driving on east-west streets are much lower. The highest increase in travel time is seen on Queen Street which has an increase of 40 seconds westbound. Reductions in travel time are seen on Dundas Street eastbound and College Street westbound.

[22:06] The 97B bus that currently uses Yonge Street during the day would be discontinued or re-routed. No changes are recommended to other Daytime bus services or the 320 night bus Subway replacement shuttle buses, Streetcar routes and subway services would also be unchanged. The impacts to surface transit travel times across the neighbourhood have also been estimated using the model. The highest increases on north south streets for bus services are seen on Bay Street with an increase in the northbound direction of 80 seconds.

[22:44] These graphs from the traffic simulation model show how long it would take for streetcars to travel east or west between University Avenue and Jarvis Street in the afternoon rush hour. The highest increase is seen on Queen Street at 40 seconds in the westbound direction. Carlton Street sees a reduction in travel time.

[23:08] A detailed evaluation has been completed for the three design concepts. Here is an overview of differences between 4a, 4b, and 4c and how well they achieve the evaluation criteria. 4a scored highest in all of the categories related to pedestrian friendliness and positive street experience, due to the high amount of pedestrian priority areas and furnishing or planting zones. For the same reasons, 4a also scored the lowest in driving and transit. 4b had the opposite results to 4a, scoring highest in driving and transit and lowest on categories related to the pedestrian experience. Both 4a and 4b scored lower in cycling than 4c because they provide more space to support either the pedestrian experience or driving access. Design Concept 4c best achieves the priorities of people moving through and experiencing Yonge Street across all modes.

[24:14] This diagram shows the typical layout of existing utilities and the subway tunnel in relation to the recommended design concept. It is recommended that the watermains and hydro conduits be relocated away from the proposed street tree planting areas. Streetlights and storm-sewer catch-basins would also need to be relocated along the new curb edge.

[24:40] The next phase of the project will refine plans for:

- Operations
- Maintenance
- Street programming
- Construction phasing and schedule.

It is recommended that detailed design take place from 2021 to 2022 and construction from 2023 to 2025. Timing is contingent upon funding approval. The project team will continue to consult with the community on impacts throughout these periods. The recommended construction will take more than one year to complete because it includes watermain renewal, utility relocations and road works. Following construction, an interim education and enforcement strategy is recommended to support the operational changes on Yonge Street. The street would also be monitored for any necessary operational or programming adjustments.

Johanna Kyte

[25:38] The design team will continue to gather feedback from the public until the end of September and then begin preparing a report to Infrastructure and Environment Committee. After a design concept is approved by Council an Environmental Study Report will be submitted to the Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) for a 30-day review period. Once the project and funding are approved, an

engineering team would be engaged to develop the preferred concept into detailed plans for tender and construction.

[26:06] You can stay involved in the project by joining the project mailing list, attending the virtual public meeting on Wednesday September 16th and completing the online questionnaire located on the project website. We want to hear from you. yongeTOmorrow – meet us there.