

yonge**T**omorrow

**Municipal Class EA –
Yonge Street from Queen Street to College Street**

Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #6 Summary

Prepared by LURA Consulting for the City of Toronto
July 2020

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Overview

The City of Toronto hosted the sixth Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meeting for the yongeTOmorrow: Municipal Class Assessment (EA) – Yonge Street from Queen Street to College Street on July 9, 2020 from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. virtually using WebEx. The purpose of the SAG meeting was to:

- provide a project update in light of recent events
- hear from participants about the effects of COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. physical distancing requirements, economic support & recovery) and other ongoing events and conversations (i.e. race & equity, crime prevention & policing, mental & physical health needs)
- provide an update on upcoming public consultation activities
- receive questions and facilitate discussion

There were 41 SAG member organizations and two Indigenous organizations invited to represent various sectors within the Study Area. A total of 31 participants, representing 23 SAG member organizations and the Indigenous Affairs Office, attended the SAG meeting. The stakeholders included, Business Improvement Areas, Resident Associations, research and advocacy groups, educational institutions, landowners and other stakeholders. A full list of SAG members and participants can be found in **Appendix A**.

This meeting feedback document is organized according to the SAG Meeting #6 Agenda. A detailed agenda can be found in **Appendix B**.

Meeting Presentation – Study Progress

The SAG meeting began with a land acknowledgement provided by Donald Corbiere, Indigenous Affairs Office, City of Toronto. The Land Acknowledgement was followed by opening remarks provided by Councillor Wong-Tam, Ward 13. Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting, then reviewed the agenda and meeting purpose. Johanna Kyte, City of Toronto, followed with a presentation providing an update, project timelines and an overview of the COVID relief initiatives implemented by the City of Toronto (i.e. ActiveTO, CafeTO and CurbTO).

Questions of Clarification

The following represents a summary of the questions of clarification that followed the presentation. The summary is not verbatim. Questions posed by participants are noted with a 'Q,' participant comments are marked with a 'C' and answers/responses provided by the project team are represented by an 'A'.

- Q.** The Mayor has said we need a “safety valve” along subway routes. Could consideration be given to a protected Yonge Street bike lane the full length of the study area?
- A.** Yes, consideration could be given to a bike lane the full length of the study area. It was previously considered by staff, but there are challenges that exist such as the prioritization of limited space given the maintenance of TTC night/shuttle bus operations on Yonge Street is required. For this meeting, we want to first check-in on how priorities may have changed due to COVID-19 and ongoing conversations. If they have changed, staff may need to reassess.
- Q.** The presentation references technical coordination efforts to come. How will roles and responsibilities for detailed design be coordinated? I am asking about things such as right-of-way management, parking, TTC access, etc.
- A.** Currently we are working towards a recommended Design Concept that will be presented to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee for consideration. After City Council has endorsed a Design Concept a 30% design will be finalised. Following Council and issuing a Notice of Completion, the design team will reach out to municipal divisions and agencies as part of the detailed design phase (30%-100%).
- Q.** There has been a lot of positive momentum related to COVID-19 relief programs such as ActiveTO (e.g., road closures and quiet streets). Will there be an evaluation of these short term projects to determine if they should be made permanent?
- A.** Programs will be monitored for challenges and opportunities in the short and long term. Council will ultimately provide direction on whether these programs will be temporary or long-term.
- Q.** How have comments, concerns and issues raised at the last Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting been addressed and what modifications were made?
- A.** All comments are considered in tandem with policy and technical evaluation in order to put forward a feasible recommendation. Since we last met, there have been no updates to the design as our public consultation process was suspended due to COVID-19. The purpose of today's meeting is to check-in to see if your priorities have changed given the pandemic. We will advise the group about any changes to the design after the next and final round of public consultation in September.

Summary of Feedback

A series of questions were posed to participants during the meeting and in an online questionnaire. The questions were intended to help the Project Team understand how stakeholders have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing conversations and events.

Meeting questions included:

1. Has the way that you **travel** to/from Yonge Street changed?
2. Has the way you **experience** or view Yonge Street changed?
3. Have your **priorities** for yongeTOmorrow changed?
4. Have your **opinions** on the yongeTOmorrow design concepts changed?
5. Do you have any additional feedback?

The following section provides a thematic analysis of participant feedback received both at the meeting and submitted questionnaires. A non-verbatim transcript of the discussion can be found in **Appendix C**. The full results of the questionnaire can be found in **Appendix D**.

1. Travel

- Participant methods of traveling to and from Yonge Street have changed since COVID-19. The change represents an overall decline in stakeholder visits to Yonge Street
- The biggest changes are a significant decline in the use of public transit (e.g., the TTC) and ride hailing or taxi services to get to Yonge Street
- A few participants have stopped going to Yonge Street all together

2. Experience

- The majority of stakeholders indicated that their experience of Yonge Street has changed since the start of the pandemic and in light of ongoing conversations (e.g., race and equity)
- The pandemic has created a foreboding environment on the street, especially with the presence of boarded-up storefronts. The emptiness of the street has also highlighted the lack of greenery and beautification
- The pandemic has highlighted the lack of space for pedestrian movement as well as a lack of amenities (e.g., bathrooms) to enhance the pedestrian experience
- The experience of traveling to Yonge Street has changed. People may be nervous to take transit and may drive instead. Measures are needed to ensure people have ways to access Yonge Street comfortably during these unprecedented times (e.g., wide sidewalks, cycling infrastructure, etc.)

3. Priorities

The clear majority of participants noted that their priorities for yongeTOmorrow have not changed given COVID-19 and ongoing conversations. The following provides a thematic summary of feedback regarding each of the project priorities:

- **Pedestrian Experience**
 - COVID-19 has further cemented the need for wider sidewalks and greater spatial allocations for pedestrians. Physical distancing measures have highlighted that many of the sidewalks in the study area are too narrow as it is difficult for pedestrians to pass each other safely.

- Improving the pedestrian experience will help stimulate the local economy in the recovery from the pandemic. Improving the walking experience and allowing for patios and places to stop will attract desirable retailers.
- This project presents the opportunity to create a “15-minute neighbourhood” for Yonge Street. A 15-minute neighbourhood is a residential hub where daily destinations (e.g., schools, grocery stores, transit, parks, etc.) are available within a 15-minute walk from home.
- Public washrooms are needed on the street to enhance the pedestrian experience
- Yonge Street is currently unwelcoming from a streetscape perspective. The boarded windows and hoarding presented during the early months of the pandemic emphasized the lack of greenery, natural elements and beautification of the street.
- Streetscape can be greatly improved with trees, natural elements, other beautification efforts and gathering points.
- Pandemic has heightened the need for outdoor public spaces such as parks and public squares.
- Seasonality needs to be considered in the design especially during the winter months. The street needs to sustain vibrancy year-round and act as an alternative to The Path.
- Yonge Street is a destination and needs to visually look like one with intentional public realm improvements emphasizing its beauty and significance to Toronto. It needs to be beautiful for everyone.
- The pedestrian and cycling experience should be prioritized over the car in the recovery from the pandemic. People may be hesitant to return to public transit in the months following the pandemic, which means ample space will be needed to support pedestrian movement and safe cycling. The return of pedestrians and cyclists will bring life back to Yonge Street.
- **Cycling Experience**
 - Cycle tracks should be considered for the full length of the Focus Area.
- **Vehicle Access (Deliveries and Loading)**
 - Importance of business operations has become more apparent during the pandemic. Space for deliveries and loading is critical given that curbside pick-up activities have increased significantly. Protected space is needed for businesses that do not have rear access or loading docks.
 - Design of side streets such as Elm Street and Edward Street need to be carefully considered to support efficient operations.
 - Delivery conditions for some organizations have improved during the pandemic due to decreased volumes of traffic on Yonge Street. However, the design, with proposed lane reductions and pedestrian priority zones needs to allow for businesses and organizations to maintain their current operational standards once traffic volumes normalize.
 - Vehicle access must be maintained given that residents may think twice about being on public transportation for some time. Residents need the option to drive to Yonge Street.

- **Patios and On Street Retail**
 - Investments in the public realm can support neighbourhood and main street recovery while reinforcing the future prosperity, livability and sustainability of the Downtown Yonge neighbourhood as a whole.
- **Festivals and Events**
 - [No feedback received regarding this priority]

4. Design Concepts

- **Crime Prevention and Policing**
 - Need equitable design response that reduces police presence on Yonge (and street design measures that do not rely upon police enforcement to be effective).
 - Crime prevention and policing is more important.
- **Economic Support and Recovery**
 - Main streets have been hit hard by the pandemic – Yonge faced economic challenges before that are amplified.
 - We need to make this a street where people want to go to spend, not just pass through on their way to another destination to support recovery.
- **Mental and Physical Health Needs and Resources**
 - The design must account for the needs of all road users – including those accessing necessary health, social and housing services in the neighbourhood.
- **Physical Distancing Requirements**
 - The inadequacy of Yonge Street’s sidewalk widths has been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic.
- **Race and Equity**
 - Equity must be confirmed as a core principle of yongeTOmorrow. The design should actively provide benefits to all those who live in, work in, and visit the neighbourhood.
 - Recent demonstrations against anti-black racism and police brutality have emphasized the critical importance of equity as built into streets and public spaces.
- **Other**
 - Green space and beauty need to be considered.
 - Public washrooms are needed that are accessible for residents, tourists and people who are street involved.

5. Additional

- Crowding and capacity concerns at Dundas Station has become more of a concern with the pandemic. The station needs to support greater capacity and additional exits are needed.
- The design concept should not change radically due to the pandemic. The concept should anticipate a return to normal and long-term planning.
- Temporary interventions such as CurbTO, CafeTO and ActiveTO should be closely monitored to assess impacts on accessibility, movement and congestion as they could offer valuable lessons to inform and refine the yongeTOmorrow design concepts.

Next Steps

Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting and City staff reviewed the approach to the upcoming virtual public event, including the online questionnaire and thanked members for their participation. Participants were also reminded to complete the stakeholder survey by July 23, 2020. The meeting was then adjourned.

Appendix A – List of Participants

The following is a list of organizations that are members of the SAG. Those organizations that participated at the July 9, 2020 meeting are signified in **bold text**.

Stakeholders

- Bridge Company Ltd., McDonalds
- **BA Group (Independent Transportation Consultants to Cadillac Fairview, Great Eagle, Cresford, and St Michaels Hospital)**
- Bay Cloverhill Community Association
- BentallGreenOak
- **Cadillac Fairview**
- **Canada Post**
- Canderel
- Church of the Holy Trinity
- Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association
- Church-Wellesley Village BIA
- **City of Toronto Indigenous Affairs Office**
- **City of Toronto Senior's Forum**
- **Cresford Developments**
- **Cycle Toronto**
- **Downtown-Yonge BIA**
- Elgin Winter Garden Theater
- Greater Yorkville Residents Association
- **Goodmans legal consultant for (Great Eagle Holdings and Chelsea redevelopments)**
- HNR Properties
- Margaret's House
- **Massey Hall**
- McGill Granby Village Residents Association
- **Milkin Holdings Limited**
- **Mirvish Productions**
- **Ryerson City Building Institute**
- **Ryerson University**
- **St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA**
- **St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association**
- St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica and Cathedral Block Master Plan
- **St. Michael's Choir School**
- **The David Suzuki Foundation**
- **Toronto Camera Centres Limited**
- **Toronto Financial District BIA**
- Toronto Skateboarding Committee
- **Toronto Youth Cabinet, City of Toronto**
- **Walk Toronto**

- YMCA
- **Yonge Suites / Firkin on Yonge**
- **Yonge-Dundas Square**

Toronto City Councillor/Representatives

- Lorraine Hewitt, Chief of Staff, Ward 13 Councillor Wong-Tam's Office
- Emily Wong, Advisor, Constituency and Planning, Ward 11 Councillor Layton's Office

Project Team

- Johanna Kyte, City of Toronto, Project Manager, Major Projects
- Maogosha Pyjor, City of Toronto, Senior Coordinator, Public Consultation Unit
- Carol Tsang, City of Toronto, Coordinator Public Consultation Unit
- David Sutanto, Steer, Transportation Lead
- Angie Ning, Steer, Project Coordinator
- Jordan Talker, Steer, Project Coordinator
- Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting, Community Engagement Lead
- Ryan Adamson, LURA Consulting, Community Engagement Support
- Michelle Diplock, LURA Consulting, Community Engagement Support

Appendix B – SAG Meeting #6 Agenda

Agenda

Meeting Purpose:

- Provide a project update in light of recent events
- Hear from participants about the effects of COVID-19 and other ongoing conversations
- Provide an update on upcoming public consultation activities
- Provide an opportunity for questions and discussion

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 9:00 am | Settling In Liz McHardy, Independent Facilitator, LURA Consulting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological housekeeping, tips and tricks for WebEx |
| 9:10 am | Land Acknowledgement Donald Corbiere, Indigenous Affairs Office |
| 9:20 am | Welcome and Agenda Review Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam, Ward 13 Liz McHardy, LURA Consulting Introductions |
| 9:35 am | Presentation – Project Update Johanna Kyte, City of Toronto, Transportation Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project refresher • City of Toronto initiatives (ActiveTO, CurbTO, CafeTO) |
| 9:55 am | Questions of Clarification |
| 10:05 am | Facilitated Discussion Liz McHardy, Independent Facilitator, LURA Consulting |
| 10:50 am | Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual PIC #3 (Online Event) September 16th |
| 11:00 am | Meeting Adjourns |

Appendix C – Discussion Feedback

The following is a non-verbatim transcription of the participant discussion session. Feedback has been edited for clarity. Participant questions are marked with a 'Q,' comments are marked with a 'C,' and staff answers and responses are marked with an 'A.'

Has the way you experience of view Yonge Street Changed?

- C. We need to look at the use of the car given that people may be more hesitant to use public transit during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. We need to look at facilitating non-car movement and this urgency is heightened by the pandemic. We need City policy to help get people out of the car.
- C. I live in the area and am doing what I can to support local business on Yonge Street. For a while, many businesses were boarded up and some still are. It creates a very uncomfortable foreboding environment. What has become clear is the need for space for pedestrians.
- C. Business owners need to have maintained access for servicing operations even as the response to the pandemic evolves. The closure of streets can affect access for businesses that do not have loading docks.
- C. The pandemic has highlighted the lack of space for pedestrians on Yonge Street. It's been crowded for so long that it became accepted almost as the status quo. People want to be able to use more space for walking and cycling.
- C. The area began to look quite gruesome with all the hoarding. But top of mind for me was that there was not enough room on the sidewalks, no greenery, nothing natural, and nothing to beautify the street. The street is not currently attractive for congregation and enjoyment. The design needs to prioritize mental health with greenery and streetscape improvements.
- Q. Have public washrooms been planned or considered as part of this project? The need for washrooms has become more apparent with businesses closed and social distancing measures in place.
- A. They have not been considered yet. The City did have a pilot project at one point with Astral Media, but it was not successful. We will add public washrooms as something to look into further.
- C. The importance of the proposed changes to Yonge Street have been further cemented. Additionally, what will be done to address the challenges facing public transportation at this time. For example, Dundas Station is in need of an upgrade. It can't be an afterthought as the station is badly underserved in terms of accommodating the volumes of riders it typically handles.

Have your priorities for yongeTOMorrow changed?

- C. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how cold and unwelcoming the street currently is. The process should introduce green space and should continue to prioritize the pedestrian experience.
- C. Prior to the pandemic it was hard to imagine Yonge Street without cars. However, the streets have been virtually empty for some time. There is a big opportunity here to make this a neighbourhood where everything is in reach within a fifteen minute walking distance.
- C. We need to rethink our priorities given that the recovery from the pandemic will take some time. Commuter traffic is a significant component of travel in this neighbourhood, but we are not expecting to see the employment cluster here bounce back for as long as twenty-four months. The design of Elm Street and Edward Street need to be carefully considered as they are important access points for deliveries.
- C. Vehicle access is a priority that has not changed especially given that people may be hesitant to return to public transit for some time. There is also an increase in curbside activity and loading continues to be a priority. One thing that is helpful in the design is block access for circulation to make loading work efficiently and avoiding truck turnarounds.
- C. We need to be focused on creating community. We can't move forward without a commitment to permanent bike lanes on neighbouring streets.

Have your opinions on the yongeTOMorrow design concepts changed?

- C. The lack of public amenities has become apparent in trying to reopen Yonge Dundas Square. It was not designed to operate under these conditions. There are not enough public or private amenities to support the amount of people that use the street. Public washrooms should be considered.
- C. The need to close portions of Yonge Street is still not apparent and doesn't seem to accommodate feedback provided by businesses.
- C. Refinements are needed to the plan to accommodate vehicles.
- C. The way to make Yonge Street lively is to emphasize transit and the public realm. We will not liven the street by bringing back the car.
- C. There needs to be proof of the design concept for the winter months such as activations that are winter-specific that can act as an alternative to The Path.
- Q. The comments about capacity issues at Dundas Station resonate. What ability does this project have to influence the TTC's planning?

- A. While the TTC is a City agency, it operates separately from Transportation Services with a separate capital plan. For this project, TTC is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee to ensure coordination between yongeTOmorrow and Station renovations. The TTC is assessing the issue, but it is an expensive and complicated fix. This project cannot propose changes to infrastructure not owned or operated by Transportation Services, such as new subway access points or subway station renovations.
- C. Yonge Street is resilient. We need to make it easier for consumers and pedestrians to engage with retailers and restaurants – to buy things and use patios. We need to facilitate that, which will facilitate stronger and better retailers.
- Q. We need open spaces and greenery in the area more than ever. What are the updated plans for this and social distancing?
- A. The study continues to evaluate concepts on a 50-year horizon beyond the short-term consideration of the pandemic. However, the evaluation criteria for the project have always assessed the ability of each concept to support additional space for: walking, patios and street retail, tree planting and greening and seating. All of the concepts help support increased social distancing and greening in the short-term. The pedestrian focused concept (4A) scores highest in these categories as it has the greatest number of pedestrian priority zones and fewer curbside activity areas.

Do you have any additional feedback?

- C. We need to make the area attractive to draw people back to Yonge Street such as programs that are either short term or long term. Do not focus on cars, but instead on how to draw people to participate in things and socialize.
- C. Yonge needs to be a destination after the pandemic. Things need to change significantly to have a pedestrian focus. I know there are some issues with tree planting due to buried utilities, but I look forward to hearing what tree planting might be possible. I also agree with the feedback regarding crowding relief at Dundas Station.
- Q. How does this strategy balance the needs of local businesses which have deliveries at all hours of the day and customers that rely on private transportation?
- A. During consultation there has been strong support for pedestrian priority zones throughout the length of the focus area. The project team recognizes the importance of all day vehicular access to some stakeholders. As a result, pedestrian priority zones have been reduced from those proposed in Alternative 4 to allow local access loops with no restrictions. This means vehicular access is less than 50m away from all front doors on Yonge Street. The majority of properties also have access via rear lanes and loading docks.

Appendix D – Stakeholder Questionnaire Results

Appendix D provides the results of the stakeholder questionnaire issued to participants prior to the sixth SAG meeting. Participants were given approximately two weeks to complete it. The results of the questionnaire will help the Project Team understand how stakeholders have been impacted by the pandemic and ongoing conversations. It will also provide insight as to whether priorities for yongeTOMorrow have changed. The results of the questionnaire will be reviewed in conjunction with the feedback received during the meeting’s discussion period and with any additional feedback emailed to the project team by July 23rd, 2020.

1. What best describes your relationship to yongeTOMorrow?

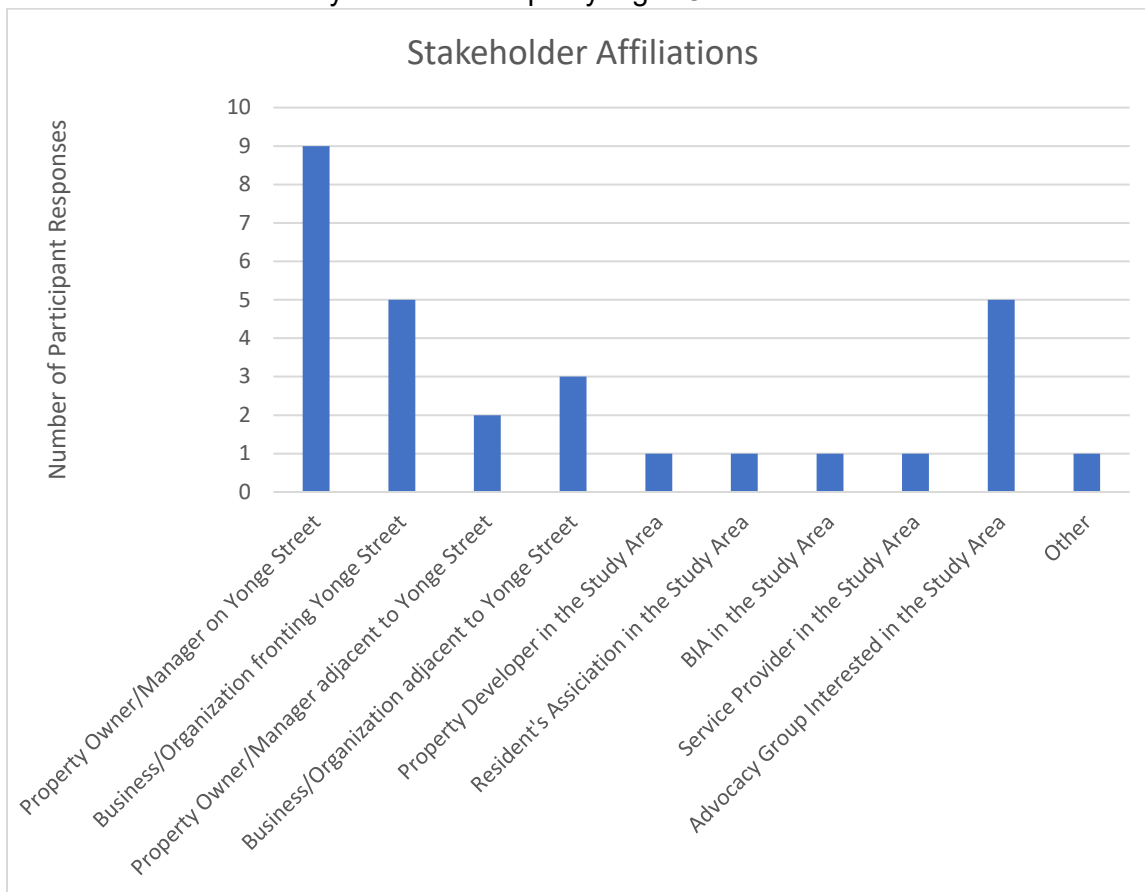


Figure 1: 22 Total Responses

2. What is the nature of your business/organization?



Figure 2: 12 Total Responses

3. Before COVID-19, how were you accessing Yonge Street? (Select All That Apply)

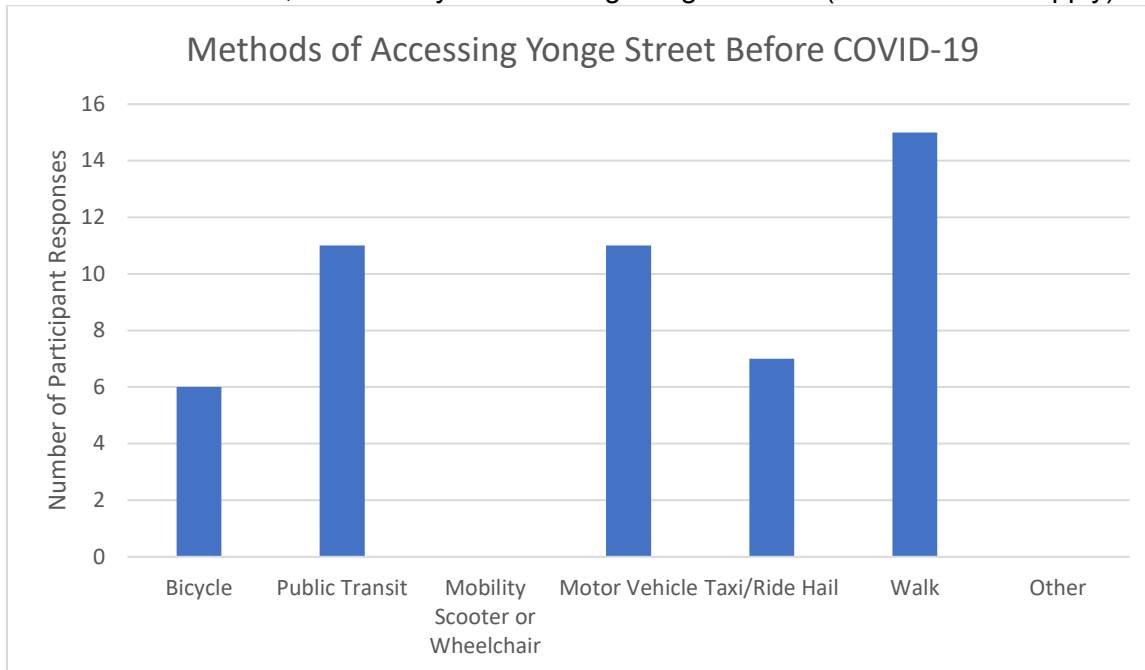


Figure 3: 21 Total Responses

4. Since COVID-19, how have you been accessing Yonge Street? (Select all that apply)

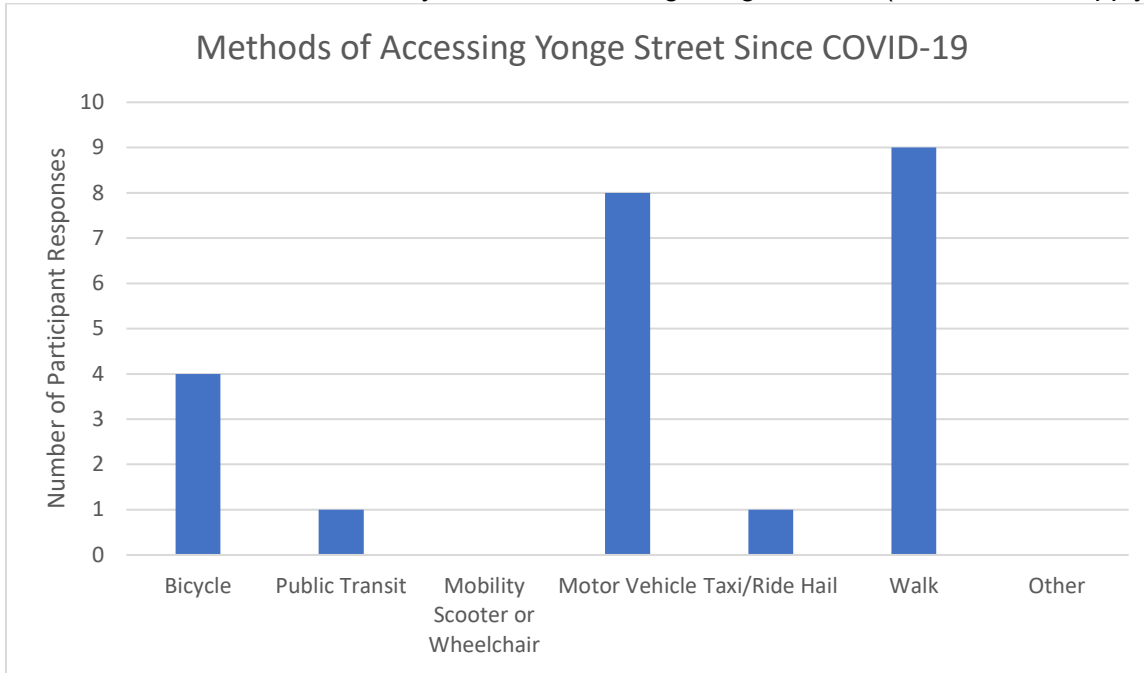


Figure 4: 21 Total Responses

5. Reflecting on some recent events and conversations: has the way you experience Yonge Street changed?

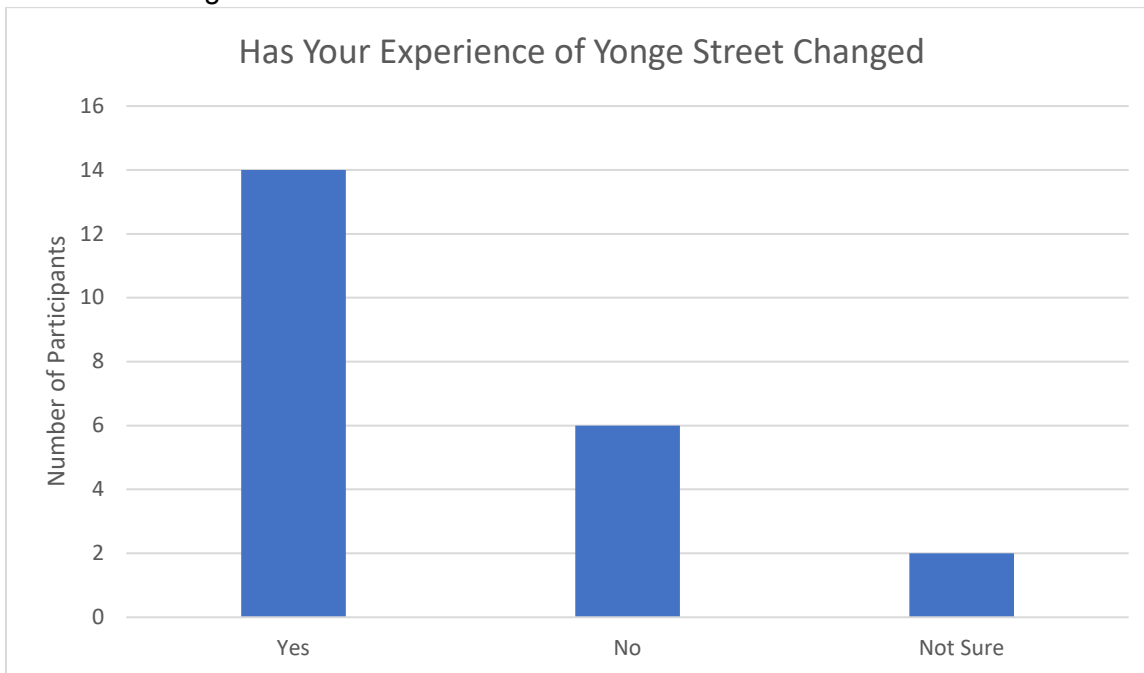


Figure 5: 22 Total Responses

6. Have recent events and conversations changed your priorities for yongeTOmorrow?

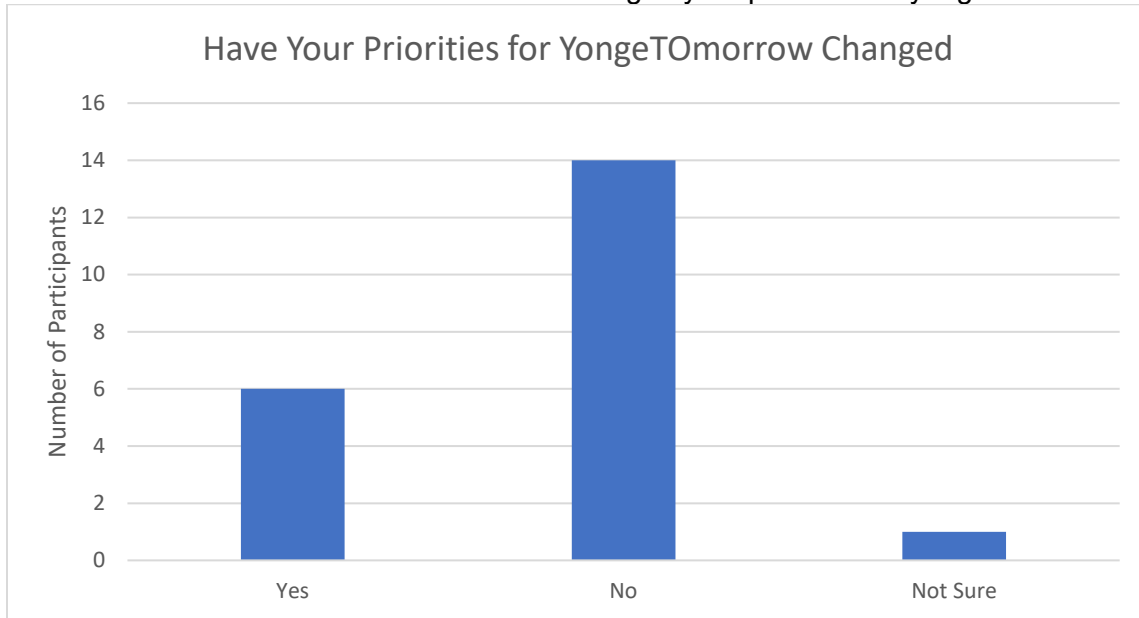


Figure 6: 21 Total Responses

7. To what extent have recent events and conversations changed your opinions on the yongeTOmorrow design concept?

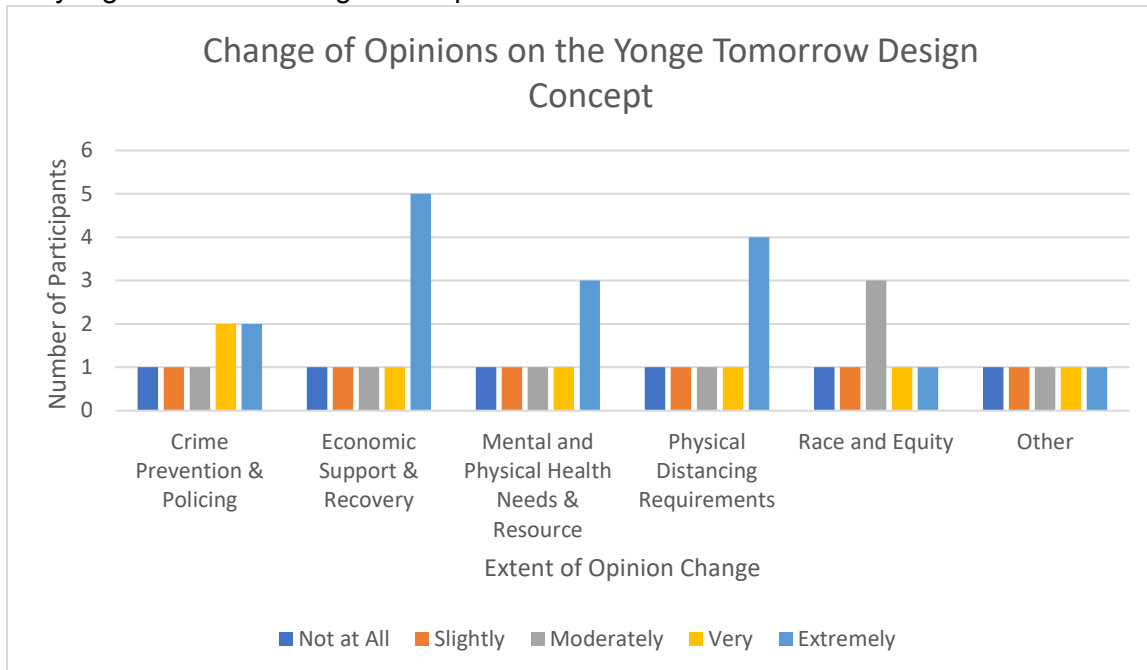


Figure 7: 5 Total Responses

Open ended Responses:

Crime Prevention & Policing

- Need equitable design response that reduces police presence on Yonge (and street design measures that do not rely upon police enforcement to be effective)
- More important

Economic Support & Recovery

- Main streets have been hit hard by the pandemic – Yonge faced challenges before that are now only more amplified
- More important
- We need to make this a street where people want to go to spend, not just pass through on their way to another destination

Mental and Physical Health Needs & Resources

- The design must account for the needs of ALL road users – including those accessing necessary health, social and housing services in the neighbourhood

Physical Distancing Requirements

- The inadequacy of Yonge Street's sidewalk widths has been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic

Race & Equity

- Recent demonstrations against anti-black racism and police brutality have emphasized the critical importance of equity, as built into streets/public space

Other

- Green space and beauty need to be considered
- Washrooms
- We need public washrooms that are both accessible for tourists but also for those who are less fortunate