

## Midtown Planning Group Meeting #3: Transportation

### MEETING SUMMARY

July 22, 2020:

Location: Virtual Teleconference (Webex Event)

**Next Meeting:** TBD

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### Introduction and Opening Remarks:

Cassidy Ritz, City Planning, hosted the Webex session and welcomed the attendees to the MPG meeting. She started with an overview of the agenda and introduced the attendees and their representative organizations. Ms. Ritz then invited Councillors to give their opening remarks. A total of 21 MPG members participated in the meeting.

Councillor Josh Matlow (Ward 12), Linda McCarthy (Ward 8, on behalf of Councillor Mike Colle), and Rachel Van Fraassen (Ward 15, on behalf of Councillor Jaye Robinson) shared their thoughts and concerns about transportation and growth in the area. They noted that transit ridership on Line 1 was at capacity before COVID-19 and that capacity has been reduced due to the need for physical distancing. Continuing development activity and the upcoming opening of the Line 5 Eglinton Crosstown LRT were mentioned as factors that will continue to feed into existing transportation issues. Safety, both with respect to COVID-19 and vulnerable road users, were highlighted as priorities for the Councillors, and that they present an opportunity to implement improvements to the local transportation network. The success of the Construction Hub Pilot program was also noted.

### Current Transportation Efforts and Future Growth & Transportation:

Michelle Berquist, Transportation Services, presented the City's response to COVID-19 with respect to transportation and provided an update on the status of other major transportation initiatives. The COVID-19 response included actions taken under the ActiveTO initiative such as Quiet Streets and the Cycling Network Acceleration. Ms. Berquist outlined the criteria taken into consideration in selecting the streets in these initiatives, including areas of higher density and lower parkland provision. Ms. Berquist noted a consultant was being retained to undertake a feasibility study for cycling on Avenue Road. Challenges include ongoing construction at Bloor Street. She also provided responses to questions about the Duplex Avenue Quiet Street and requests for cycling network and additional Quiet Streets implementation. Ms. Berquist also shared updates on Council directions and on the impact of COVID-19 on near-term road works projects, noting that budgets and timelines for some projects are in flux.

Nigel Tahair, City Planning, spoke on the relationship between land use and transportation and updated the MPG on the status of ongoing transportation analysis. Mr. Tahair noted a key part

of this analysis will be integrating updated land use growth estimates to understand future transportations demands. A surface transit study is also being undertaken for Avenue Road, Yonge Street, and Bayview Avenue with the goal of providing relief to TTC Line 1. Previous studies in this area were referenced, which spoke to the need to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists, and transit ridership over single-occupancy vehicles. Mr. Tahair noted that many of the initiatives brought forward through ActiveTO advance this goal and mentioned that the impact of COVID-19 may accelerate telework. Mr. Tahair also spoke on planned regional transit initiatives such as the Ontario Line and their potential implications for transportation planning in Midtown, including expanded transit capacity on TTC Line 1.

A copy of the agenda is provided in **Appendix A**. A list of staff and MPG members who attended the meeting is provided in **Appendix B**. A copy of emailed feedback submitted after the meeting is provided in **Appendix C**.

## **Questions & Answers:**

Following the presentation, attendees were able to ask panellists follow-up questions: This was facilitated through using the Webex “raise hand” function or typing questions in the Q and A feature.

At 4:30 PM, a technical issue with Webex servers disconnected all users and resulted in the session ending prematurely. Ms. Ritz invited attendees to follow up and send questions directly to staff if they were not addressed.

**Q:** Walking is a predominant mode of movement in the Yonge-Eglinton area. There are opportunities with many of local neighbourhood streets that would provide a pleasant and park-like environment. These local streets would act as circular routes to support recreation, and other routes to key destinations such as Davisville school and the Beltline. How do prioritize these types of walking routes? We will also need to address signage and lighting once investments are made.

**A:**

### **(Cassidy Ritz)**

- These routes are part of the Midtown Mobility Network shown on Map 21-9 of the YESP, this map will be informative.
- Many of these suggestions were already incorporated at the time of the secondary plan, although with different terminology (e.g. "Priority Local Street")
- As part of transportation implementation work, coordination with servicing upgrades is being reviewed and timing and phasing of capital upgrades

### **(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- Michelle Berquist’s team in Transportation Services was created to handle these tasks. They will look at opportunities to advance these projects though development opportunities or area transportation plans.

- The secondary plan will inform improvements. Many of the mid-block connections require sites to redevelop.
- Near-term work is then programmed from opportunities in the transportation plan
- Transportation Services focuses on delivery and sees the secondary plan as a foundational document in this process

**Q:** We need an immediate response for cycling networks. We know the needs in the community. How do we avoid overcrowding on Line 1 as riders go up? Dangerous drivers move along Yonge Street without safe bike routes in Midtown. A bikeway on Yonge is a doable opportunity. We have working designs along Bloor and Danforth and Yonge is already constrained by construction. We can use remaining space for bikeways. This brings multiple benefits for safety, local business and connectivity, and there is high community support. How can we get a temporary bikeway on Yonge this summer during COVID-19?

**A:**

**(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- Council has directed to look at three Midtown routes: Yonge, Avenue, Mt Pleasant
- The accelerated cycling routes were on those closer to implementation with less complexity in review
- Staff capacity is also a challenge, staff area focused on delivering cycling infrastructure across the city.
- However, agreed on the points raised
- Work on Yonge Street would fall outside of the work program directed by Council
- Bloor and Danforth bike lanes were implemented as they were further underway
- Yonge is a challenge in that Avenue, Yonge and Mount Pleasant will need analysis and additional workload

**Q:** In 2015, the work for the Eglinton Crosstown included undertaking a study on traffic infiltration. There is still significant neighbourhood traffic infiltration. Did this study take place and if so, what are implementation actions and why have these failed to stop traffic?

**A:**

**(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- Studies and mitigation measures have been undertaken for specific segments
- However, there were some gaps in the measures given the large scale of construction (e.g. diversions, road and intersection closures)
- Both mitigation measures (such as turn restrictions) and closures from Metrolinx require a permit with an accompanying study reviewed by the City
- These are developed in consultation with local councillors and stakeholders when there is a larger impact

**Q:** What is the timing on the Eglinton Connects work?

**A:**

**(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- No specific month has mentioned by Metrolinx, but estimated completion by 2022
- City expects to have more detail on timing soon
- Once this is available, will then be able to plan around Metrolinx's deadline
- A report will go to Council later this year about a study for an interim arrangement of Eglinton Avenue in time for the completion of the Crosstown
- Report will include time estimates

**Q:** Are there any turning restrictions along local streets such as Soudan Avenue? Are these monitored and mitigated?

**A:**

**(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- Transportation Services has a team coordinating with Metrolinx and project companies
- Turn restrictions have been implemented on streets along Eglinton Avenue, though unsure about other streets
- Will be ongoing monitoring of these turn restrictions
- Understanding that this isn't a perfect solution, especially with the large amount of construction in the area

**Q: (Comment)** Midtown was essentially left out of ActiveTO except for the Duplex-Jedburgh Quiet Street. There is growing recognition of, and growing support for, bike lanes on Yonge Street to provide an alternative to the subway with reduced capacity.

**Q:** What is the plan for managing the extra load of travellers on Line 1 at Yonge and Eglinton?

**A:**

**(Nigel Tahair)**

- This is a long-term initiative with several parts in the process, such as Automatic Train Control and platform upgrades at Bloor-Yonge station
  - The Ontario Line's is estimated by Metrolinx to have notable capacity improvements for Line 1 (15% reduction at Yonge-Eglinton)
- The Richmond Hill extension on Line 1 is also a long-term project with a 20 to 25 year forecast

**(Rachel Van Fraassen)**

- Councillor Robinson moved motions requesting an updated report on Line 1 capacity requirements
- This report will have to be updated to consider recent factors:
  - Automatic Train Control will add capacity but it also requires more trains
  - The Ontario Line will add more complexity to this topic

**(Councillor Josh Matlow)**

- Given the current governance dynamics, the transportation vision is more of an aspiration
- The province has a lot of control on these transportation topics, such as through Metrolinx
- The development industry's allowances permit more density, especially in Yonge-Eglinton
- We must engage the province for more control for land use and transportation planning matters at the municipal level, which the City has continued to advocate for
- Otherwise, we won't be able to match land use and transportation needs to work together

**Q:** It is still uncertain when Ontario Line will actually be built. Relief to Line 1 is needed immediately. What will be done in the interim? Growth is continuing and adds to these problems. What's the plan?

**A:**

**(Nigel Tahair)**

- COVID-19 has shown that the status quo was not unsustainable
- One major thing we're seeing is a change in behaviour (telecommuting, online shopping, different office space requirements)
- Office trips to downtown drove many of the trips on the subway
- We will need to discuss what these changes will mean

**Q: (Comment)** I agree with Councillor Matlow that the Ontario Government rushed through Bill 197 last evening without committee or public review. Bill 197 reduces public involvement in planning, EAs and expropriation for capital projects. All while folks are preoccupied. Shame!

**Q:** Nigel Tahair mentioned a toolbox of strategies before COVID. Many of these such as pop-up patios exist outside Midtown. What are strategies for these actions in Midtown? What can Council do to provide resources?

**A:**

**(Cassidy Ritz)**

- Jacquelyn responded to this earlier on Yonge Street, with Mount Pleasant and Avenue coming later

**(Jacquelyn Hayward)**

- As projects are accelerated, another consideration is how this will affect cycling network expansion next year
- Transportation Services are understaffed with maxed out contractor resources for these tasks
- Reduced municipal revenues and increased COVID-19 expenditures are also another constraint

## Appendix A: Agenda

### Midtown Planning Group Meeting #3 – Transportation

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 | 3:00 – 4:30pm | Webex Meeting

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<b>Discussion Item</b>	<b>Staff Lead</b>	<b>Duration</b>
1 Introduction	Cassidy Ritz	10 mins
2 Councillor Remarks		10 mins
3 Current Transportation Efforts	Michelle Berquist	20 mins
4 Future Growth & Transportation	Nigel Tahair	15 mins
5 Discussion	All	30 mins
6 Recap & Next Steps	Nigel Tahair	5 mins

## Appendix B: List of Attendees

### Midtown Planning Group Meeting #3 – Transportation

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 | 3:00 – 4:30pm | Webex Meeting

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#### Councillors and Staff:

- Councillor Josh Matlow (Ward 12)
- Denise McMullin (Ward 12)
- Slavisa Mijatovic (Ward 12)
- Rachel Van Fraassen (Ward 15, on behalf of Councillor Jaye Robinson)
- Alysha Archibald (Ward 15)
- Tracy Luong (Ward 15)
- Linda McCarthy (Ward 8, on behalf of Councillor Mike Colle)

#### City Staff:

- Andrea Old, City Planning
- Anson Ma, City Planning
- Cassidy Ritz, City Planning
- Heather Oliver, City Planning
- Nigel Tahair, City Planning
- Svetlana Lavrentieva, City Planning
- Jacquelyn Hayward, Transportation Services
- Katie Wittman, Transportation Services
- Michelle Berquist, Transportation Services

#### MPG Members:

- Al Kivi, South Eglinton Ratepayers' and Residents' Association
- Andy Gort, South Eglinton Ratepayers' and Residents' Association
- Ann King, Stanley Knowles Housing Co-operative
- Arlena Hebert, Lytton Park Residents' Organization
- Daryle Hunt, Oriole Park Association
- Diane White, Quantum Owners and Residents Association
- Doug Obright, Leaside Residents' Association
- Geoff Kettel, Leaside Residents' Association and the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations
- Heather Harris, Oriole Park Association
- Henry Byres, Bayview-Leaside BIA and Midtown Yonge BIA
- Jane Fitzwilliam, West Keewatin Neighbours
- John Taranu, Deer Park Residents Group and Cycle Toronto Midtown



- Lais Fabricio, Eglinton Way BIA
- Matthew Bagnall, Toronto Lands Corporation (TDSB)
- Maureen Kapral, Lytton Park Residents' Organization
- Michael Black, Cycle Toronto and Walk Toronto
- Shelley Laskin, TDSB
- Rachel Chernos Lin, TDSB
- Tom Cohen, Eglinton Park Residents' Association
- Tom Worrall, Lytton Park Residents Organization
- Tomi Mitrovic, Quantum Owners and Residents Association

## Appendix C: Emailed Feedback

### Midtown Planning Group Meeting #3 – Transportation

Wednesday, July 22, 2020 | 3:00 – 4:30pm | Webex Meeting

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**From: Michael Black**

**On Behalf of Cycle Toronto and Walk Toronto**

Heather and Cassidy,

Unfortunately, due to technical issues, I had to connect to yesterday's Midtown Planning Group Meeting using telephone and I didn't manage to provide any feedback. I am therefore using email to convey my input.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize that I am in complete agreement with John Taranu's superb comments. We are thrilled to see the amazing progress being made by ActiveTO in installing temporary bike lanes across the city. I applaud staff for their efforts. But at Cycle Toronto Midtown, we do rather feel like poor cousins! We haven't seen any new bike lanes this summer in our own neighbourhoods, nor have we benefited from much new bike infrastructure over the last decade.

Speaking with my pedestrian hat on, I will mention that the conversion of Duplex and Jedburgh to a 'quiet street' is really popular with walkers and joggers. I've covered this route many times lately and I've seen a lot of happy faces belonging to people comfortably travelling on foot in the shared space. Alas, things haven't really improved for cyclists, who can have a hard time negotiating intersections that are turned into bottlenecks by barriers. In order to create a true, streamlined 'bike boulevard', most of the stop signs on Duplex and Jedburgh would have to be removed. As things are now, the route resembles an obstacle course that forces cyclists to continually stop and start.

I think it's safe to conclude that the Duplex/ Jedburgh conversion is a success for pedestrians, but that people riding bikes need a proper route on another street. That street is Yonge. You will be familiar with the most important reasons: compared to Avenue Rd. and Mt. Pleasant Rd., midtown Yonge has the highest residential densities, the most trip destinations for cyclists, the most attractive urban ambience, the highest potential for multimodality thanks to its alignment with the subway, and (as the longest street in Canada) the best connections to other parts of the city. Add to these another factor related to new, pandemic-related travel patterns: midtown has an extraordinarily high proportion of white collar residents who are working from home. Many are no longer commuting to the downtown or frequenting the PATH and indoor malls; instead they want to go out to get some fresh air and do local shopping on main streets like Yonge. The bicycle is ideally suited to fulfill this need.

For the sake of brevity, I won't go further into the details. Let it suffice to say that cyclists have been telling us for years that Yonge is their first choice for north/ south bike lanes in the midtown — and this preference has been intensified by the Covid-19 shutdown.

I don't really have to remind anyone that we are still in a state of emergency created by a pandemic that is unprecedented in our lifetimes. If ridership on the Yonge subway line increases to the point where proper physical distancing becomes impossible, Sars-CoV-2 transmission on the TTC's trains could reach disastrous proportions. There are not many expeditious ways by which we can relieve subway crowding. One is to encourage Torontonians to cycle by installing temporary bike lanes. Yes, we are thrilled that Bloor-Danforth subway riders are being given a safe alternative via surface level bike lanes. But it is a horrible double standard for City Hall to be denying the same protection to Yonge subway patrons (who use the most popular transit route in Canada).

At today's meeting, it was mentioned that making a decision on Yonge at this point would be premature, since staff have undertaken a corridor study which is examining the Yonge, Avenue Rd. and Mt. Pleasant Rd. transportation options. I would like to emphasize that this project (as well as the Yonge Tomorrow and Reimagining Yonge EAs) are focused on LONGTERM, PERMANENT SOLUTIONS. What John Taranu is proposing is completely different: a SHORT-TERM project which will lay down TEMPORARY bike lanes on Yonge.

Other cities around the world are creating temporary bike lanes on the fly. Those responsible are acknowledging that, in an emergency, it is not necessary to dot our i's and cross our t's. Toronto has a history of undertaking many carefully developed studies. But the ActiveTO program is a short-term response to a crisis. It is meant to implement stopgap, temporary, makeshift solutions — in other words, its nature is the very opposite of traditional planning processes. I therefore implore staff, especially planning staff, to drop long-ingrained habits and adopt the nimble, extempore approach advocated by people like Janette Sadic-Khan.

Admittedly, some errors will be made but most can be corrected. It's not as though the city has an unblemished record of never making mistakes in building (or not building) transportation infrastructure! Let's just do what needs to be done. If staff's resources are being stretched at the moment, then I would recommend that we temporarily pull people who are working on non-essential, secondary projects and have them devote their time to ensuring that our city's most important street is kept safe.

To repeat: we must not overlook Yonge. It is critical to be addressing its problems now. While traffic volumes are still below normal, it is possible to implement temporary bike lanes. However, the task becomes far more difficult if we wait until the autumn, when it is likely that Toronto's re-opening will be advancing at a rapid clip. Without adequate cycling infrastructure, midtown's streets could become overrun with motor vehicles, and this could set a pattern that will persist FOR YEARS to come.

Thus, we arrive at a central paradox that confronts the Midtown Planning Group. It was set up to undertake long-term planning. But the exigencies of the Covid-19 crisis surely demand that we act on the fly in order to successfully grapple with a rapidly transforming transportation situation;



failure to do so may very well result in a protracted car-hell that will make a mockery of the Midtown Planning Group's goals.

Our situation may be likened to a family that wants to catch a plane when the gate is about to wrap up boarding. They could sit down in a restaurant and carefully look over the flight schedule, verify the time, check the airline's safety record and study past statistics in order to determine the how often the flight arrives late. The family could politely discuss the information with the utmost care and meticulousness. But of course this would not be the prudent course of action. What our travellers should be doing is running to the gate.

Best wishes,

Michael Black

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