

# WEST TORONTO RAILPATH EXTENSION

## **Detailed Design Public Event No.2 Feedback Summary**

November 2020

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# 1. Introduction

The detailed design phase for the West Toronto Railpath Extension (WTRE) was completed in September 2020. Design and implementation of the Railpath Extension from Dundas Street West and Sterling Road south to Abell Street and Sudbury Street is being carried out by the City of Toronto and Metrolinx. This phase produced detailed design drawings for construction, a Construction Management Plan, Environmental Monitoring Plan and Trail Operations and Maintenance Plans.

The design phase also considered public feedback. The project team met with the public and stakeholders at key points throughout the process. To wrap this phase up, the City hosted a consultation event on February 26, 2020 at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) which was attended by 263 people. Project partners on site included City of Toronto Transportation Services (division leading this project), Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Urban Design, Metrolinx, Consultants, Councillor Perks and Deputy Mayor Bailão. Community stakeholders were also invited to participate including Friends of the West Toronto Railpath and DeRAIL: Platform for Architecture and Art.

The event format included an open house, presentation and question & answer session to review plans for:

- Four pedestrian/cycling bridges
- Landscape architecture and plantings (trees, plants, flowers)
- Community connection locations and renderings
- Opportunities for public art
- Trail amenities such as signage, lighting, and seating

This report summarizes the feedback received leading up to, during and after the consultation event.

## Overview of Consultation Activities for Design Phase

Public consultation for this project utilized a range of engagement and consultation activities to involve community members including:

- Two stakeholder workshops (May 14, 2018 and June 25, 2019)
- Two public events (September 13, 2018 and February 26, 2020) with event materials posted on the project website ([toronto.ca/westrailpath](https://toronto.ca/westrailpath))
- One meeting with the City's Design Review Panel (November 1, 2018)
- Three neighbourhood meetings about community connections (April 15-17, 2019)
- Individual meetings with property owners who are impacted by the trail extension
- Communications:
  - o website ([toronto.ca/westrailpath](https://toronto.ca/westrailpath))
  - o updates to over 1,350 email subscribers (subscribe via website)
  - o 41,000 flyers for public events to project area delivered by Canada Post
  - o online feedback forms
  - o event tweets (@TO\_Cycling, @TO\_Transportation)
- Information sharing with local councillors and elected officials

## 2. Overall Feedback

The project team has been consulting on design work for the past two years. Consistent with the feedback received to date, people are excited about extending the West Toronto Railpath south to Sudbury Street/Abell Street. Overall, respondents want the multi-use trail/linear park to be built today and are impatient with the project timelines.

People had the most to say about: favouring the look and feel of Railpath as a whole (e.g. saffron colour, wild, industrial and native plantings); expediting the project schedule and funding for construction; importance of accessible bridges and community connections; and desire for a future bridge connections like one to the Sorauren Park.

In terms of design priorities and concerns, inquiries were received about locations for water fountains and public art opportunities, native plantings and how best to manage different trail users. There were also differing opinions about future connections from the terminus of the Railpath extension at Sudbury Street. Some expressed a desire to connect Railpath further south either over the rail corridor to Liberty Village and/or to King Street West. Others shared concern about any potential future parking impacts on Sudbury Street.

### Participation

Approximately 263 people attended the public event. A total of 366 feedback forms were completed.

The perspective of respondents who filled out the feedback form was mainly comprised of people who:

- live in the area closest to the Existing Railpath north of Dundas St. W. (41%)
- live in the area closest to the Existing Railpath south of Dundas St. W. (36%)
- travel along the existing Railpath (69%)

### What We Heard

Below is a summary of key comments received by members of the public through the various communications listed above which have been organized by topic.

#### Design Approval

After reviewing the presentation and/or information materials, feedback form respondents were asked if they like or dislike the main design elements:

- 92% like and 4% dislike the bridge designs
- 95% like and 1% dislike the landscaping designs
- 90% like and 5% dislike the community connections

## **Bridges**

- Ensure accessible for everyone (i.e. people with wheelchairs, bikes or strollers)
- Comments for ramps wherever possible
- Agreement with colour, designs and in keeping with existing Railpath bridges (i.e. industrial, utilitarian, old school bridge look)
- Some find the aesthetic cold and industrial
- Don't use wood (i.e. bridges over Bloor Street and Dupont Street require repair)
- Concern about site lines, narrowness and accessibility of Brock Street bridge
- Concern about vandalism and tagging on glass and corten steel panels
- Glass panels and features aren't good for birds
- Consider people that need to access bridges with their bikes and sometimes cargo bikes (e.g. channel to facilitate walking bike up or down)
- Comment that the bridge over Barrie GO rail corridor obstructs view of rail way lines south of Dundas Street West and seems inhospitable

## **Community Connections**

- Dundas Street West and Queen Street West entrances look great
- Many comments wanting assurances that trail will be accessible to people with wheelchairs, strollers and bikes
- Northern Place connection needs to be more private to respect residents on this cul-de-sac street (i.e. still looks too open)
- Appreciation for connections to parks (e.g. Pessoa Park)

## **Connect Railpath Further**

- Support for connecting Railpath to Sorauren Park via the Barrie Corridor bridge which could provide access to neighbourhoods on the west side of rail corridor
- Bridge connection to Sorauren Park should have been part of this project
- Suggestion to explore extending east west direction along Dupont rail corridor
- Sudbury Street needs connection to Liberty Village because otherwise this area feels "dead" and not as vibrant as other neighbourhoods along Railpath as well as comments that Sudbury Street cannot handle cycling facility traffic
- Needs to connect to York Beltline Trail to the north/east of area (Caledonia Road and Eglinton Avenue West)

## **Landscaping**

- Support for the use of native, wildflowers and pollinators plantings
- Should be a better mix of plantings than currently seen along existing Railpath
- Support for less manicured, more informal and wild feel of trail
- Comment that existing Railpath is "too wild" and overgrown
- Ensure maintenance of overgrown grasses and weeds because currently impedes areas along existing Railpath
- Requests for big trees to create canopy and provide shade
- Use vines as much as possible
- Lighting needs to feel warm and don't light up the sky in the process

## **Public Art**

- Artworks should be curated to be place specific and enhance the public experience of the site
- Move beyond a static permanent installation to embrace new kinds of art
- Explore the Indigenous context of the site
- Happy about involvement and integration of StreetART for future art components
- Use sustainable materials in place of oil acrylics

## **Project Schedule**

- Frustration with the amount of time it is taking to build the extension
- Doesn't need to be this complicated

## **Signage and Wayfinding**

- Consider using language independent pedestrian/cyclist signs like in Europe

## **Sudbury Street**

- Concern about removal of street parking on Sudbury Street to accommodate cycling facilities between Queen Street West and Abell Street as well as any kind of future facility further south along the street
- Street is already congested with parking and don't need addition of bike lanes

## **Design Features**

- Requests for water fountains/water refill stations as well as washrooms
- Numerous requests for lots of waste and recycling bins
- No hostile seating (e.g. movable seating like in Bryant Park NYC)
- Long-term approach needed to address vandalism

## **Trail Users**

- Concerns about safety and enforcement both along Railpath and at entrances during evening hours
- Big groups make commuting on Railpath difficult so bi-directional approach important (e.g. Martin Goodman Trail)
- See Montreal for examples that separate people who cycle and walk with pavement markings to help address tensions
- Safety phones for security (i.e. similar to university campus/subways) which would be better for blind people
- Support for centreline to divide directional trail traffic
- Queen Street West and Liberty Village have dense populations and need wider facility

## **Existing Railpath (Sterling Street to Dupont Street)**

- These bridges need to be made accessible too
- Improve access from Dupont Street
- What happened to the water fountain at Wallace Street?
- Install temporary signal as part of detour route at Bloor Street and Perth Street during Metrolinx's re-alignment construction works

## Public Consultation

- Lack of understanding about who is leading the project and silos within the City and between different levels of government doesn't look good for implementation
- Venue for February 26<sup>th</sup> event was too small and crowded

## Additional

- Consider comprehensive land-use review of properties adjacent to Railpath
- Explore conservancy for Railpath to protect and animate (e.g. Highline, NYC)

# 3. Questions and Answers

The following is a summary of the questions received at the public event, submitted online feedback forms and through email correspondence and the responses provided from the project team.

## 1. Why hasn't Railpath been built yet?

Most of the Railpath extension would be located within Metrolinx owned rail corridor and construction of the Railpath requires coordination with Metrolinx and their track expansion works along the Kitchener GO line. Since the event, the timeline has been update to expect construction to start in 2022. More information about this work is available on the [Metrolinx Kitchener GO Expansion website](#).

Technical challenges for the project also included:

- negotiating a shared use land agreement with Metrolinx
- existing infrastructure particularly existing utilities and relocations of utilities
- negotiations with numerous private properties

While the study and planning have taken more time than anticipated, we have a final trail alignment and completed the detailed design process.

## 2. How much will Railpath extension cost?

The cost of the detailed design work for the Railpath extension is \$2.3M, funded jointly by the Federal Government and the City of Toronto through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF). The estimated cost for construction is approximately \$30M.

## 3. What is next?

- Completion of Design and Construction Documents: September 2020
- City staff are working to confirm fair market value for impacted property and obtain authority for next steps in property acquisition
- City of Toronto to obtain Metrolinx and Private Properties: 2020/2021
- Construction proposed start: 2022

#### **4. How will construction be funded?**

WTRE construction cost estimate is approximately \$30 million which Transportation Services is requesting as part of the 2021 City budget process. The City is committed to building Railpath and is also exploring funding opportunities in collaboration with both provincial and federal levels of governments.

#### **5. Will Railpath Extension ramps to bridges be accessible?**

The path as a whole meets AODA requirements for accessible ramps accommodating all types of pedestrians. Bridges form part of the path and meet this same design criteria. Barrier-free access is provided at all trail access points.

The No Frills site connection in particular will have a longer barrier-free ramp access which slopes towards Lansdowne Avenue. The ramp will be four metres wide so when you are turning there is room.

#### **6. Will accessibility be improved on the existing Railpath bridges (e.g. Bloor St., Dupont St.)?**

Railpath is accessible from all street connections.

Adding additional accessibility to existing Railpath bridges is not part of current scope and we rely accessible connections via adjacent streets. That said, inquiries about Bicycle Stairways have been received and currently and while there are no plans for these the interest has been recorded.

#### **7. What will happen to the current green space on Sudbury Street?**

We recognize that the boulevard is popular with dog-owners and it is rare to find this type of space within the neighbourhood. This area is subject to Metrolinx's rail expansion plan and will be used for Railpath extension. Design options will be considered that maintain the existing dog-friendly boulevard and green space along Sudbury Street to the fullest extent possible. Consider that this land was originally set aside for the Railpath extension.

#### **8. Are you impacting parking on Sudbury Street (between Queen St. W. and Abell St.)?**

No.

#### **9. When will further study take place for extending the Railpath south/east of Abell Street?**

There is no date for further study. Currently, this particular area is experiencing many changes including new development applications, Metrolinx track expansion for Regional Express Rail and Electrification, potential SmartTrack / GO RER station in the Liberty Village and King Street West area. As part of the above projects, the City, in coordination with Metrolinx, will work to include the Railpath extension further south.

In the interim, the City is providing for dedicated cycling infrastructure south of King Street West along Douro Street and Wellington Street eastward in order to connect with the Garrison Crossing and Fort York.

### **10. How will the Railpath Extension connect to the Martin Goodman Trail?**

From the termination of the WTRE at Sudbury Street and Abell Street, cyclists may use on street cycling facilities along Sudbury Street, Douro Street and Wellington Street, to reach the Garrison Crossing pedestrian and cycling bridge and ride south to connect to the Martin Goodman Trail.

Another alternative is to travel south along the Strachan Avenue bike lanes from the new Douro Street bike lanes to reach the Martin Goodman Trail. The planned King-Liberty pedestrian/cycle bridge will also connect WTRE to the Liberty Village which will provide another option in future to connect to the Martin Goodman Trail.

### **11. Will there be stewardship opportunities?**

Stewardship opportunities will be explored through both Parks, Forestry & Recreation in collaboration with Friends of the West Toronto Railpath. Plantings in community connections are designed to be stewardship opportunities. City maintenance will focus on larger zones between community connections.

### **12. Will there be any commercial opportunities (e.g. markets, pop-ups)?**

There are no plans to add markets but community groups are welcome to apply for permits with Parks, Forestry & Recreation. City is open to conversations and ideas to animate Railpath.

### **13. How will you deter vandalism to design features and signs? What is the graffiti management plan?**

Graffiti management plans include:

- All signage will be painted in saffron/orange colour (to match Bloor West and Dupont bridges) and signs can be touched up or repainted if required.
- All concrete noise walls will have a trellis system to support native vines and in time create green walls.

### **14. How will you address the conflict between faster and slower users?**

The Railpath Extension is being designed as a multi-use facility and will function as a shared space between a variety of different users including people who cycle, walk, and rollerblade among others. Generally, the paved portion of the trail will be 3.5 metres or wider in some sections.

In terms of the shared use aspect of multi-use trails and delineating separate space for users, the reality is that we are very constrained. A significant section of the trail does not have enough space to provide any kind of user-separation. That said, the project team mitigating potential issues with:

- "traffic calming" in "pinch point" areas
- maintaining sight-lines
- encouraging safe and appropriate use of the trail through signage and trail etiquette communications

### **15. What is the plan for Art?**

Exciting opportunities exist for art along the Railpath! For example, building on our Create Your Path-West Toronto Railpath projects during Phase 1 of the Railpath, [StreetARToronto](#) will continue to collaborate with community partners along the path to identify sites and plan art projects along this new phase of the path. Opportunities for engagement include identifying potential mural sites and opportunities for exhibits, tours and more. StreetARToronto is an initiative of the City of Toronto, Transportation Services Division.

### **16. What is the status of the King Liberty smart track location?**

According to Metrolinx, there is no new information to share.

### **17. What are the detour plans for trail users during the realignment work that needs to happen on the exiting Railpath between Bloor Street and Dupont Street? Will there be a phased approach to trail closures?**

Metrolinx is still working on the logistics of closures and temporary access.

### **18. Will there be water refills stations and washrooms?**

There will not be washrooms. Water bottle filling stations are being considered for areas around the Railpath connections points nearest to Dundas Street West, Dufferin Street and Queen Street West.

### **19. What will be done about Electric bikes and E-Scooters on the trail?**

All parks at the 20km/h speed limit and trying to address speed through design.

### **20. Who do I call at 4 a.m. in the morning regarding a disturbances on Railpath?**

As with any residential area, call 311 for enforcement.

### **21. What kind of noise mitigation and accessibility is Metrolinx providing from Railpath to GO Station?**

Accessibility will be provided in the plans.

Noise is being looked into (i.e. there are fences along the corridor).

## **5. Conclusions**

The project team reviewed all feedback received and together with technical considerations, worked towards finalizing the design.

As noted throughout this summary, there is considerable public interest for extending Railpath and how it is going to function and look. The public event earlier this year exceeded the project team's expectations for attendance. People are now waiting for construction with eyes to where Railpath should extend to next.

## **Thank you for being involved!**