

# Improving Access and Connection

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## **Why improving access and connection to and around Toronto Island is important:**

At 242ha (598 acres) of land area, the Island is one of the largest parks in Toronto with natural and cultural heritage park features and points of interest that provide a diverse park experience for everyone. Toronto Island offers a unique experience that is only accessible by water. During peak seasons, ferries service three landings on the Island and funnel all traffic through one main ferry terminal on the mainland. Outside of peak season (summer months), service is reduced to one Island landing on the east side at Wards Island. Circulation on the Island also impacts the safety and enjoyment of visitors throughout the park. Once on the Island, visitors can rent bicycles and some watercraft in a limited capacity.

## **Issues to be addressed:**

This bottleneck has resulted in the expansion of a system of water taxis that operate across the City's waterfront providing service to seven docks on the Island (inclusive of main Ferry landings). We have heard that many visitors that take water taxis are encouraged to take the "free ferry" back to the mainland at the end of their Island visit which further places additional pressure on the capacity of an aging ferry fleet. To further compound the operations at the Jack Layton Ferry Terminal service vehicles must access the Island through this downtown terminal proceeding on to mixed pedestrian-vehicle ferries during all hours of operation. The variable ferry services, seasonal schedule and irregular one-way operations by the water taxi providers makes access to and from the Island confusing and unpredictable and does not take advantage of or integrate strategically with the expansive revitalization of Toronto's Central Waterfront and is not addressing the needs of a growing park user population.

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Visitors to the Island face challenges getting around as soon as they have arrived at the Island – starting at the three primary ferry landings and extending into the park. The Island is a large but there is limited information about where to go and how to get there. There is no formalized on Island land-based or water based transportation system so getting around the Island takes time.

### **What we have heard:**

We have heard that. Introducing more paving and impermeable surfaces is not appropriate in many locations. However, there is a need to establish a hierarchy of existing pathways, to formalize some well-used pathways (desire lines) to expand the capacity of the most heavily used pathways to address current uses and demands while enhancing access within the park. Within natural areas, boardwalks and controlled access points have been identified as potential solutions to manage increased use while limiting trampling and off-trail wandering. In addition to considering pedestrian improvements, we have understood there is a need to consider how to integrate active transportation (through cycling and paddling) and accessible transportation throughout the island with coordinated infrastructure (including consideration for an on-island accessible tram or shuttle service, expanding rental opportunities, short-term storage and dedicated recreational access point) to support the expanded uses.



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## **IDEAS & ACTIONS being considered:**

The following ideas are based on inputs received through the extensive engagement process of Phase 1 and including inputs of staff from various divisions, advisory groups, and the public. We share them with you today in the form of a Draft Demonstration Plan. Please share your comments with us by completing the on-line survey that will inform plan refinements as we move into Phase 3 of the project in spring 2022.

### **1. Improving (Water) Transportation to the Island**

- A. Improve Ferry frequency and align with programming and events
- B. Provide year-round access to Centre Landing to support expanded programming and seasonal offerings with complementary on-Island transportation to support in all seasons
- C. Enhance Ferry landings to support Ferry Fleet replacement, improved accessibility, sustainability, flood mitigation and improved visitor amenities
- D. Provide dedicated servicing ferry from the Port Lands to eliminate vehicle and pedestrian mixing at Jack Layton Ferry Terminal.
- E. Create a Water Shuttle network to provide new predictable connections to destinations across the waterfront and islands
- F. Enhance access to short-term docking and servicing for personal watercraft

### **2. Improving Circulation on the Island**

- A. Expand pedestrian trail networks to support expanded and intensive uses
- B. Consider new pedestrian bridges within the park at key points to improve accessibility across the islands
- C. Create opportunities to use the internal waterways to move through and experience the park through water nodes and enhancement of rental opportunities
  - Enhance wayfinding with new signage on land and water and digital information sharing

### **3. Enhancing Accessibility**

- A. Provide Accessible Tram service to all ferry landings and stops at key destinations across the island
- B. Provide accessible connections to existing spaces (beaches, in-water, ESAs)
  - Create integrated rest areas within new pathway system and along existing routes
  - Explore opportunities for digital wayfinding including curated interpretation and signage elements at key locations





MAP ACC-01: Improving Access and Connection - Ferries

IDEAS & ACTIONS:

- 1. Improving (Water) Transportation to the Island
  - A. Provide year-round access to Centre Landing to support expanded programming and seasonal offerings with complementary on-island transportation to support in all seasons
  - B. Enhance Ferry landings to support Ferry Fleet replacement, improved accessibility, sustainability, flood mitigation and improved visitor amenities
  - C. Provide dedicated servicing ferry from the Port Lands to eliminate vehicle and pedestrian mixing at Jack Layton Ferry Terminal





MAP ACC-02: Improving Access and Connection - Shuttle / Taxi / Tender

IDEAS & ACTIONS:

- 1. Improving (Water) Transportation to the Island
  - D. Create a Water Shuttle network to provide new predictable connections to destinations across the waterfront and islands

- E. Enhance access to short-term docking and servicing for personal watercraft





## MAP ACC-03: Improving Access and Connection - On Island

### IDEAS & ACTIONS:

#### 2. Improving Circulation on the Island

- A. Expand pedestrian trail networks to support expanded and intensive uses
- B. Consider new pedestrian bridges within the park at key points to improve accessibility across the islands

- C. Create opportunities to use the internal waterways to move through and experience the park through water nodes and enhancement of rental opportunities

#### 3. Enhancing Accessibility

- A. Provide Accessible Tram service to all ferry landings and stops at key destinations across the island
- B. Provide accessible connections to existing spaces (beaches, in-water, ESAs)