

ActiveTO Midtown Yonge Street Pilot Project

Stakeholder Meeting #1 Summary

Date: Monday, March 15, 2021 from 7 – 9 p.m.

Host: City of Toronto, WebEx



Councillors:

Councillor Matlow and Councillor Layton

Business Improvement Areas:

Bloor Yorkville BIA

Midtown Yonge BIA

Rosedale Main Street BIA

Yonge & St. Clair BIA

Residents' Associations:

Avenue-Bay Cottingham (ABC) Ratepayers' Association

Brentwood Towers Tenants Association

Deer Park Residents Group

Greater Yorkville Residents' Association

North Rosedale Ratepayers' Association

Oriole Park Residents' Association

Quantum Owners & Residents Association

South Eglinton Ratepayers and Residents Association

Summerhill Residents' Association

Site Specific:

Toronto Lawn Tennis Club

Tricon Residential Inc.

York International School

Yorkminster Park Baptist Church

Organizations:

City of Toronto Senior's Forum

Toronto Youth Cabinet

Cycle Toronto

Walk Toronto

Canada Post

Staff and Project Team, City of Toronto:

Jacquelyn Howard, Director, Project Design & Delivery

Becky Katz, Manager, Cycling & Pedestrian Projects

David Dunn, Senior Project Manager, Cycling & Pedestrian Projects

Karina Fortin, Senior Project Manager, Cycling & Pedestrian Projects

Daniel Samson, Project Engineer, Cycling & Pedestrian Projects

Maogosha Pyjor, Stakeholder and Public Consultation

Danielle Davis, BIA Office

Tobiah Abramson, CaféTO Project Manager

IBI Group:

Zibby Petch

Dillon Consulting Limited:

Karla Kolli and Daniel Hoang

ActiveTO Midtown Yonge Street Pilot Project

Meeting Purpose

This was the first key stakeholder meeting for the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot project. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the stakeholders to the project, and to provide context, project objectives, and the work done to date.

The meeting was facilitated by Dillon Consulting (Dillon) and began with a First Nations land acknowledgement. Councillor Matlow and Councillor Layton provided opening remarks and welcomed stakeholders. There were 26 stakeholders in attendance.

The following is a summary of what we heard from stakeholders:

- **Motor vehicle speed/speeding** along Yonge Street was identified as a key issue and suggestion to add traffic calming measures and enforcement as part of the pilot to help slow down vehicles
- Concern about the additional **traffic infiltration and circulation** as a result of the pilot and how the project will address these challenges
- **Greater road safety and accessibility** for all road users, particularly the separation of uses and the additional proposed road safety measures and features
- Desire to **extend the pilot north**, and to **connect** the cycle track to existing trails, cycling network, and destinations (Rosedale Ravine and Don Valley)
- Support to **enhance the vibrancy of the street** through patios/café culture and streetscape improvements (planters, lighting, etc.)
- Important to **support local businesses**, and **coordination between pilot and CaféTO installations with businesses** to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed
- Address potential **loading and servicing challenges** for businesses (particularly those without laneways)
- **Coordination is needed with the TTC** to avoid route obstruction and blocking of lanes
- **Coordination is needed with road and development construction work** on parallel routes
- Interest in **timeline of the project** (when it will be installed and for how long)

Background

The City provided stakeholders with the project context and background, including the following:

Policy Guidance - This project is guided by various existing policies and plans, such as the Official Plan policies that support Toronto as a walking City and bringing residents within one kilometre of a designated cycling route; the Vision Zero Road Safety Plan that aims to eliminate traffic related injuries and fatalities; and the TransformTO Climate Action Strategy which aims to shift towards more active and sustainable modes of transportation.

Yonge Eglinton Secondary Plan - Focuses on bringing a well-connected network of safe and comfortable cycling routes to Midtown, including cycling facilities and connections to the downtown core.

2019 Council Direction - City staff was directed to undertake a corridor study of three parallel streets (Yonge Street, Avenue Road and Mount Pleasant Road) between midtown and the core to review opportunities for cycling infrastructure in 2021.

As a response to the COVID - 19 pandemic, City Council adopted a motion in 2020 to explore a temporary protected bikeway along Yonge or parallel routes from Bloor Street to north of Lawrence Avenue in conjunction with on-street patios, road safety, traffic-calming measures and other streetscape improvements.

Experience on other Similar Projects - ActiveTO Destination Danforth and the Bloor Street Bikeway (Spadina-Shaw) and Bloor West Bikeway Extension (Shaw – Runnymede) were three projects that provide lessons learned that can be applied to the ActiveTO Midtown project.

The City was directed by Council to compare Yonge Street, Avenue Road and Mount Pleasant Road from Bloor to Lawrence Avenue to determine the best corridor for the installation of the temporary complete street pilot. The comparison considered:

- 1) Context and the role of Corridor in Network
- 2) Road User Safety
- 3) Business Benefits
- 4) Curb Lane Potential
- 5) Cycling Connectivity and Impact

Overall Yonge Street performed the strongest in the analysis.

Using Mentimeter (an online polling/engagement platform), participants were asked:

“In what ways do you think Yonge Street could be improved through a temporary project?”

The results included:

- Greater accessibility for seniors and those with mobility issues
- Improving safety for all road users through safety features such as protected bike lanes, speed limits, and barriers
- Addition of cycling infrastructure, including protected bike lanes
- Supporting businesses
- Streetscape improvements through planters, lighting, green spaces
- Enhance patios and café culture
- Separation of transportation modes
- More and safer opportunities for active transportation

The City provided a brief overview of Complete Streets Principles which include Streets for People, Streets for Placemaking, and Streets for Prosperity.

The City also described the pilot approach, which provides an opportunity to test, measure and refine the installation of the project as needed.

Within the context of COVID-19, the complete street approach allows better use of the right-of-way, providing a safer, more predictable streetscape design. It enables greater physical distancing, provides alternatives to transit, supports local businesses by improving access options and expanded patios, and provides more safety features.

Photos of various complete street features and examples from other pilots and projects around the City were shared. This included cafés, curb extensions, parking and loading, cycle tracks, bike share and bike parking, planters and accessibility features.

Using Mentimeter participants were asked to select:

“Which of these features are you excited about?”

The top five options were:

- Cafés – 15 responses
- Accessibility – 10 responses
- Cycle Track (protected bike lane) – 9 responses
- Planters – 9 responses
- Curb Extensions – 6 responses

Participants were also asked to select:

“Which of these features are you concerned about?”

The top five options were:

- Accessibility – 9 responses
- Loading – 9 responses

- Cycle Track (protected bike lane) – 8 responses
- Bike Parking – 4 responses
- Parking – 4 responses

The stakeholders had an opportunity to raise their hand to expand on why they have concerns over any of the features listed. Responses from the group included:

- Cycle track – the posts used in other parts in the City were seen as unsafe and unsightly, especially when broken
- Parking and loading – noted as being important but we also need to make sure that this space is properly separated from pedestrians and cycle tracks for safety
- Limited space – concerns over buses, construction on Eglinton Crosstown, crowding on sidewalks, and traffic, and the need to coordinate all of this within the limited space
- Aggressive vehicle speeding on Yonge Street



The City provided details on the ActiveTO Midtown design considerations, which included:

- Reviewing Existing Conditions
- Preliminary Design / Analysis
- Detailed Design
- Installation
- Post Installation / Evaluation

The City outlined segments along Yonge Street and discussed how to minimize transit impacts, how to minimize traffic infiltration, how to improve intersection operations, and public safety features such as CaféTO curb lane closures.

The City discussed the project evaluation process and the criteria that will be used to monitor the pilot. The evaluation criteria, which will involve before and after data, includes:

- 1) Monitor environment (traffic volume, travel time, speed and traffic infiltration)
- 2) Safety (collision data)
- 3) Cycling environment (cycling volume)
- 4) Curbside demands and parking (parking and loading)
- 5) Public perception and level of support

It was explained by the City that the complete street design uses the curb lane and lane alignment in a more consistent way, which calms traffic speeds, provides more predictability around the various street elements (patios, bike lanes, etc.).

After the ActiveTO Midtown considerations were presented, stakeholders were able to ask questions with responses provided by the Project Team. A record of this can be found in the **Questions and Answers** section.

Proposed Next Steps

The City discussed the proposed next steps, which included:

- Consulting with stakeholders March – April 2021 on the temporary pilot on Yonge Street between Davisville Avenue and Bloor Street
- Reporting to Infrastructure and Environment Committee and City Council in Spring on recommendations
- Analysis to be continued in the future on both Yonge Street and parallel Duplex Avenue between Davisville Avenue and Lawrence Avenue
- Supporting Yonge Street main street businesses north of Davisville Avenue via 2021 CafeTO program
- Public Meeting on April 27, 2021, pending Council decision

The City is looking for ongoing feedback and input on two areas of focus:

- 1) Design considerations: How it looks
- 2) Site Specific Considerations: How it works

Stakeholders were notified that the next stakeholder meeting will be held on April 9th, 2021 from 9 - 11 a.m. For those who are unable to attend, one alternate person from their stakeholder group can attend on their behalf.

Participants were asked through Mentimeter:

“Is there anything you’d like to learn more about with regards to the ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street pilot?”

The results were:

- Timeline for consultation and installation
- Duration of pilot
- Timeline and consideration of a potential north extension
- Impact on flow of emergency vehicles
- Year round activation
- Opportunity for youth involvement
- Ways to improve pedestrian experience beyond patios and temporary planters
- Accessibility

These results will be used to help design and determine the content for the next stakeholder meetings.

Questions and Responses

The following is a record of the comments, question and answers that were collected throughout the meeting. **Q = Question A = Answer C = Comment**

Project Coordination

Q: There are a number of development applications along Yonge Street and St. Clair Avenue – how is this going to dovetail with the proposed adjustments?

A: We will be looking at the development applications that need to use the curb lane and make sure to account for them in the design and avoid spaces that developments may need. We will also be connecting with City staff who accept development applications to make sure we are aware of development that may be coming up.

C: The pilot needs to consider the different characteristics of the street along Yonge Street. The cemetery for example, will be a long stretch without patios.

Speed

Q: Given that people do not always obey speed limit signs, can the installation of speed cameras be used to slow vehicles down?

A: The City has 50 speed enforcement cameras throughout the City. At this point, the Province has only given the City the authority to use these to address speeding within school zones and designated community safety zones. The pilot projects have been successful in reducing speed over time. We look forward to being able to use speed cameras in more locations, once we have the authority to do so from the Province.

Traffic infiltration

C: Some streets (such as Heath Street and Roxborough Street) are “land locked” and must use Yonge Street as their main entry/exit point as they do not have other ways to get in and out of their immediate neighbourhood. Having fewer lanes on Yonge Street will be a challenge.

C: It will be difficult to prohibit traffic infiltration because people live along the side streets and along Yonge Street, and will need to get to their homes. It is not just a street that people use as a shortcut or thoroughfare.

Loading

Q: Some parts of Yonge Street do not have laneways and servicing occurs on Yonge Street. Is staff taking this into consideration?

A: Identifying loading areas and alternatives for loading such as the use of side streets, are factors we look at when determining the design. We have experience

dealing with unique servicing needs of businesses and this is something we will be focusing on in our engagement process with businesses and property owners.

Barriers

C: The flex-posts (white bollards) on Bloor Street cycling tracks are often smashed and it is recommended that an alternative type of barrier be used along the cycle track for this project.

A: We will have to use some of these flex-posts if this project moves forward, for snowplow operators who need to see vertical elements to be aware of the materials that are on the ground.

We are also learning from other ActiveTO initiatives and how to install bollards in a manner that prevents some of the issues with the flex-posts.

Connectivity

Q: Is there an opportunity for this project to provide a safe bike path connection to the Rosedale Ravine and Don Valley?

A: There are several projects underway that may provide opportunities for better connections to the Rosedale Ravine. The Rosedale Valley Road State of Good Repair project is currently underway and there may be opportunities to tie signage and increased mobility objectives between the two projects. We are also teaming up with the TO360 wayfinding team to do a review of wayfinding elements that guide cyclists and other road users to different safe routes and destinations. The City is happy to continue this discussion with stakeholders and see how we can incorporate elements of wayfinding and connectivity between the various projects happening.

Q: Is there a potential to extend this project north?

A: This is something the City will take back. There are fair points and rationale for extending the pilot further north, but there are also some significant constraints

C: The Brentwood Towers' Tenant Association endorsed the Midtown Complete Street pilot at their last board meeting and advocate for the extension of the pilot from Davisville Avenue to Soudan Avenue.

Supporting Businesses

Q: How will this project affect the businesses, and how can we support them through this? Walkthroughs with the BIAs are important to ensure that nothing is impeding access, parking, or loading zones for businesses.

A: One of the major objectives of this project is supporting main street businesses, while improving the safety of all users on the street and shifting the balance of the road space in order to achieve these goals.

The City will be undertaking engagement with the BIAs and getting feedback from businesses as part of the design process. Walkthroughs with the BIAs are planned as part of the engagement process to determine the needs of local businesses.

CaféTO Installation

Q: Has the City spoken to businesses on Bloor Street about how the cafés have integrated into that street context and how some of these lessons can be applied?

A: The City worked closely with the Bloor Street, Bloordale Village and Bloor West Village BIAs as we rolled out the bike lanes there. One thing we would carry over is to install the cafés for the restaurants before construction at the beginning of the season so that the cafés can maximize their patio time.

Q: Will any of the designs or transformations as part of this project result in having to say no to any food operators looking to have a curbside café on Yonge Street?

A: For ActiveTO projects, we have the ability to be more responsive to cafés, changes and requests from the community along the corridor. The City will take every opportunity to make it so that every food operator who applies for a café, as long as it meets the café guidelines, can have a café in front of their business. We encourage businesses to apply as soon as they can. Even in this very early stage of the design process, we want to make sure that we are able to integrate everyone's needs and requests.

A post-meeting comment form was sent out to all stakeholders to provide feedback on the meeting and any additional thoughts. The following is the feedback received:

- Meeting #1 format worked well, and stakeholders appreciated the opportunities for discussion throughout and the time dedicated to the Q&A at the end
- In future meetings, stakeholders would like more clarity on how their feedback will be used, how walking (pedestrian movement) will be improved through the pilot, and how youth and art installations can be included in the project