

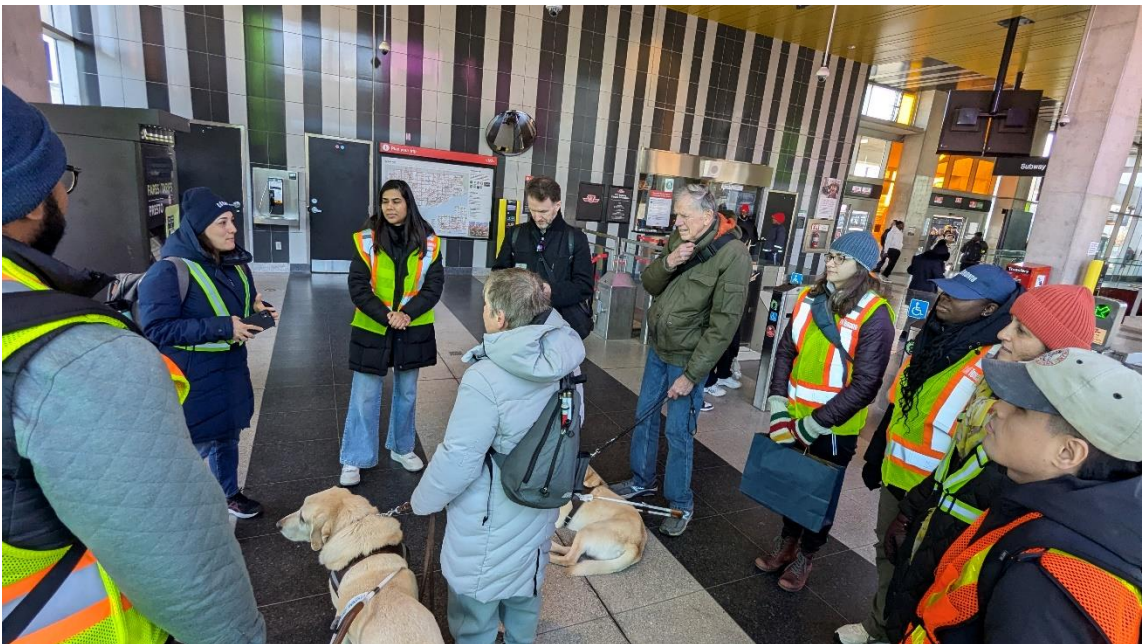
BATHURST STREET AND FINCH AVENUE WEST

Accessibility-Focused Site Visits

November 2024

**STREETS ARE VITAL
PLACES IN TORONTO.**

**HOW OUR STREETS ARE
DESIGNED SHOULD
IMPROVE SAFETY AND
ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL.**



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit represents a collaborative effort from City staff and members of the accessibility community. Transportation Services is thankful for the insights and time of all participants.

The tour was led by the Transportation Services Cycling and Pedestrian Projects unit, Sayan Sivapathasundaram, Kanchan Maharaj, Igor Samardzic, Sonya De Vellis, and other Transportation Services staff.

Introduction, Vision, and Goals

In November 2024, the City of Toronto's Transportation Services Division conducted a site visit focused on a design concept that includes directional Tactile Walking Surface Indicators (TWSIs). This visit, referred to throughout the report as the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit, was part of an ongoing effort to gather accessibility-focused feedback on new complete street infrastructure.

The goal of the Site Visit was to understand the effectiveness of proposed designs, particularly for those with sight loss challenges, and to use this insight for future planning and design standards.

This report provides a summary of feedback received from participants during and following the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bathurst Street is a major arterial road with high vehicle volumes, including several bus routes. The City is proposing a series of improvements between Steeles Avenue West and Bainbridge Avenue as part of a road resurfacing project scheduled between 2025 and 2027. The changes will include one-way cycle tracks, multi-use trails, protected mid-block crossings, a TTC queue jump lane at Finch Avenue West and Sheppard Avenue West, and protected intersections. Other planned upgrades include 11 signal upgrades and sidewalk improvements. These efforts aim to enhance safety, expand the cycling network, and improve transit infrastructure, particularly in response to the area's high traffic volumes and pedestrian safety concerns.

SITE VISIT PLANNING

In September 2024, Transportation Services began recruiting study participants and developed a detailed project plan. The intersection of Bathurst Street and the Finch Corridor Trail was chosen due to considerations to add accessible features, such as directional tactiles, at the existing crossing to guide people across the proposed bikeway and transit enhancements to reach the trail on the opposite side of Bathurst Street. Planning for the site visit involved discussions with the project team, reviewing existing directional tactiles in Toronto, and consulting with experts.

SITE VISIT

During this visit staff members assisted participants in navigating the sites, while also conducting thorough recordings of participants' feedback and photography.

Three individuals participated in the visit, which began at Finch West TTC subway station, and moved to the location where the Finch Corridor Trail intersects on Keele Street. The group traveled west along the multi-use trail to the intersection of Murray Ross Parkway and Columbia Gate, which featured directional tactiles leading to a sidewalk.

The group assessed the mid-block intersection of Bathurst Street and Finch Corridor Trail, focusing on the interaction between the multi-use trail, sidewalk and crossing from one side of Bathurst Street to the other.

Unlike previous accessibility site visits, the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit did not feature existing infrastructure that participants could experience and comment on. Instead, staff used temporary materials to configure the proposed TWSI layout, which allowed them to make adjustments in real time, which could then be reflected on the final drawings. This is in response to participants' previous requests to be involved during the design phase of projects, rather than post-installation when there are less opportunities to make adjustments.

OVERARCHING FEEDBACK

Site Visit Feedback

An in-person debrief session was held after the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit among the participants and Transportation Services staff to discuss final thoughts and suggestions. Participants shared a wide range of detailed feedback.

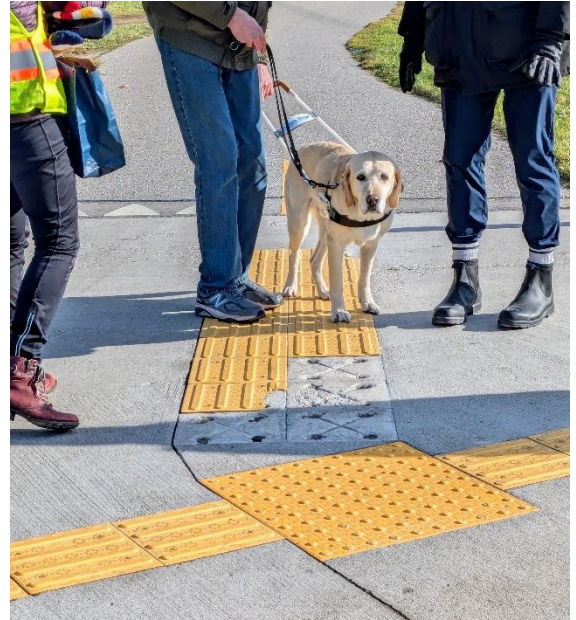
After the visit, participants congregated to discuss their feedback, key observations, and identify areas for further investigation. Following the visits, City staff compiled and summarized the feedback, which was then reviewed by the participants for accuracy and completeness.

Design Feedback

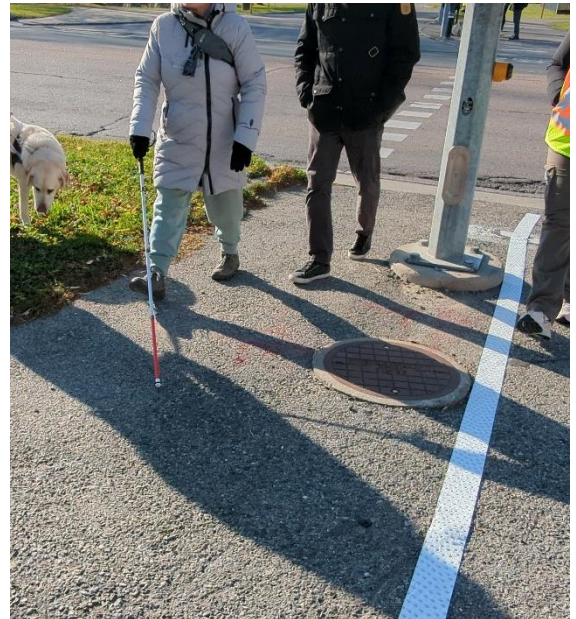
The feedback from the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit underscored the crucial need for accessible and safe infrastructure especially consulting people with disabilities prior to designs being implemented.

Participants emphasized the need for clearer, simpler and more straightforward wayfinding.

MURRAY ROSS PARKWAY AND COLUMBIA GATE - DIRECTIONAL TWSI



BATHURST STREET AND FINCH CORRIDOR TRAIL CROSSING



2.1

Mid-block Intersection: Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West

Tactile and Directional Guidance:

- Pedestrians, particularly those who use guide dogs or are cane users, found it difficult to navigate the crossing using directional TWSIs, as too many indicators may be overwhelming.
- Tactile indicators at decision points may not always align properly when shorelining leading to disorientation.
- Maintenance issues, including tactile paving becoming obscured by debris or snow, reduce their effectiveness.

Path and Material Changes:

- Pedestrians and guide dog users struggle to detect changes in path material when not properly aligned for shorelining.
- A more uniform material change could improve path detection and overall safety.

Pedestrian Crossings:

- Confusion arises when pedestrians encounter bikeways at intersections when they are at sidewalk level, potentially leading them to walk into bikeways instead of staying on the sidewalk.
- Placement of APS (Accessible Pedestrian Signals) and crossing buttons near bikeways leads to confusion for pedestrians.
- Clearer signage and more intuitive path guidance are needed to reduce confusion at crossings and decision points.

FINCH CORRIDOR TRAIL MID-BLOCK INTERSECTION – TESTING DIRECTIONAL TWSI



2.1

Mid-block Intersection: Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West

Clarity at Decision Points (where two directional tactiles meet):

- Clear, unambiguous decision points are crucial for pedestrians to understand where to go next (e.g., whether to continue straight or turn).
- Simplifying decision points and aligning tactile indicators with pedestrian movement would improve navigation.

Traffic Cues for Orientation:

- Environmental cues, like traffic sounds, play a vital role in orientation for pedestrians, especially those with sight loss.
- Using traffic sounds and other environmental cues is essential for navigating areas with multiple paths and intersections.

Roll Curbs and Curb Ramps:

- Roll curbs or curb ramps are highly recommended to help define the transition between bike paths and sidewalks.
- Roll curbs provide both tactile and visual indicators, making paths clearer for pedestrians and people who cycle.

FINCH CORRIDOR TRAIL MID-BLOCK INTERSECTION – TESTING DIRECTIONAL TWSI



3.0

Conclusion

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK:

Participants raised concerns about overused directional TWSIs, which caused confusion, and inconsistent tactile paving alignment, leading to navigational challenges. Pedestrians, especially those that use guide dogs, struggled with detecting path material changes, highlighting a need for more uniform surfaces. Issues at pedestrian crossings, especially where bike lanes intersect sidewalks, were highlighted, along with unclear signage and APS placement. Participants stressed the importance of clear decision points and rolled curbs or curb ramps to better distinguish between different areas (bike path, sidewalk).

Participants expressed their appreciation for providing feedback during the pre-installation phase, which would help inform the project design.

NEXT STEPS:

Transportation Services staff will undertake several actions based on the feedback from the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit :

- Share results of the Bathurst Street and Finch Avenue West Site Visit internally with colleagues and accessibility committees, and externally at conferences to inform design and best practices.
- Meet with the project team to share results and incorporate participant feedback into the proposed designs.
- Continue consulting and conducting on-site reviews with people with disabilities to gather feedback on accessible design.
- Present the designs during public consultation events for feedback.
- Continue working with Transportation Services staff to ensure that accessible features receive an appropriate level of winter maintenance service.
- Continue to review and source materials for directional tactiles that are resilient and can withstand the elements or maintenance vehicles.

November 2024



For advice, insights and comments please contact
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