



Stakeholder Meetings Summary (Round Two)

TTC 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan

Wednesday, August 9, 2023; 2:00 – 4:00 pm and 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Meetings held online

Overview

On Wednesday, August 9, 2023, the TTC hosted two stakeholder meetings for the second of three planned rounds of consultation about its 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan. Both meetings covered the same information and discussion topics (see Appendices A and B for agendas). The purpose of the meetings was to share and seek feedback on draft focus areas for both plans.

The stakeholder group includes a broad range of transit-interested organizations with both city-wide and area-specific mandates. Across both sessions, 12 people participated representing a range of organizations. Also participating were staff from the TTC and Third Party Public, an engagement team retained by the TTC to support the engagement process on the 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan. See Appendix C for a full list of participating staff and organizations.

Third Party Public prepared this meeting summary, which covers both sessions. The intent of this summary is to capture the range of feedback shared at the meetings; it is not intended to serve as verbatim transcript. Third Party Public shared a draft of this meeting summary with participants for review before finalizing it.

This summary includes three sections:

- Key themes in feedback shared at both meetings
- Detailed summary of the afternoon stakeholder meeting
- Detailed summary of the evening stakeholder meeting

Key themes in the feedback shared at both meetings

The following themes reflect a summary of the feedback received from participants across both meetings.

Improving safety is important and requires a nuanced, non-punitive approach. Participants were generally supportive of the safety measures TTC had launched. Many felt that it was very important that whatever additional safety initiatives TTC considers, it should avoid taking a heavy-handed approach that would disproportionately punish the city's more vulnerable people. Suggested safety improvements included: place phones or calling systems in strategic locations (like bathrooms); reduce fines for fare evasion; improve both the content and audio quality of announcements and communications (so customers have a better sense of what's going on), and; prioritize safety interventions in areas of known need or issues.

Real-time information, trip planning, and scheduling need to be easy-to-use, consistent, and trustworthy. Across several topics and discussions, participants pointed out that inconsistent, inaccurate, or misleading information across the TTC's website, transit apps, and signs at stations and stops erodes trust in the system. They said it should be a priority for information about schedules and vehicle location to be accurate. They also said TTC should be careful not to rely too heavily on third party apps, cell phones, and data plans – even when the subway system has cellular service, not everyone has or can use a smartphone, and cellular plans in Canada are among the most expensive in the world.

Preference for service improvements and transit priority over removing or reducing Express Bus Network service. Most participants thought that, instead of removing stops or Express Bus service in areas where the TTC has been unable to achieve target travel time savings, it should instead focus on achieving transit priority measures to improve service. Transit priority doesn't always need to be implemented along the entirety of a route (which can take a long time and requires political support) – it could also be targeted to problem areas.

Improving service is key to improving customer experience. While many of the ideas being considered in the Customer Experience Action Plan are good and would be improvements, TTC should not lose sight of the fact that its core offering is public transit. The best thing TTC can do to improve customer experience is provide frequent, reliable service.

Integrating TTC service with other modes and transit services presents opportunities to offer more travel options. Participants suggested strategies to make it easier for people on bikes to combine their trip with transit (for example, identifying dedicated spaces on vehicles for people with bikes) and to chain together trips across boundaries and transit operators (such as co-locating services from different operators where there is demand).

Detailed summary of the afternoon Stakeholder Meeting

Nine participants attended the afternoon session, representing organizations focusing on transit advocacy, active transportation, residents' associations, and more. Much of the discussion in the afternoon Stakeholder Meeting focused on Express Bus Network service, safety, trip planning, and real time information, though participants shared feedback about other focus areas, too.

Feedback about the 5-Year Service Plan

Overall feedback about the 5-Year Service Plan

Participants wanted to understand how the TTC plans to measure the success of its new 5-Year Plan. Will it have ridership growth targets? Customer satisfaction targets? A target reduction of service disruptions? Given the City's TransformTO goal of having 75% of trips under 5 km to be outside of private vehicles by 2050, significant action is needed. *The TTC responded that customer satisfaction, reliability, and ridership growth are all aims of the 5-Year Service Plan. Rather than set targets or goals, the TTC is striving for continuous improvement in these and other areas. The TransformTO goals are ambitious and require significant investment – the 5-Year Service Plan is one of many ways the TTC is working towards them.*

Feedback about Express Bus Network options

Generally, participants did not support the TTC removing Express Bus Network stops or reallocating Express Bus service to Local Bus service in order to better meet Express Bus travel time targets. They said decreasing stops could create accessibility challenges and could lead to reduced ridership. Several participants said they would prefer to see broader policy solutions (like adding designated bus lanes or signal priority) to improve the Express Bus Network. Other suggestions included:

- consider running express service only for the part of a route where it is possible to achieve time savings (for example, 925 Don Mills Express could run express north of O'Connor Drive but Local south of it);
- if removing Express Bus Network stops, work with Bike Share to fill in first-mile-last-mile gaps, and;
- look at adjusting fares and routings to better align express service with demand. For example, do not require people pay an extra fare to ride the 142 Downtown Express (if it's re-instated) and explore ways to use that route to relieve pressure on Line 1.

Feedback about integration with regional partners and other modes

The discussion about integration focused on better connecting TTC with bikes and other transit operators.

Suggestions on how the TTC could better encourage people to combine bike and TTC trips included:

- identify designated space on subways and streetcars for bikes;
- locate Bike Share docks near transit stations where different transit providers connect;
- add more weather-protected bike parking and bike repair stations at subway stations, and;
- better communicate how to use bus bike racks so people feel more comfortable using them.

Suggestions on how to best connect TTC with GO transit once fare integration has launched included:

- bring more consistency to fare payment expectations across services (right now a single tap is required on TTC but a double tap is required on GO) and educate customers on their different payment options;
- align different transit operators' service and schedules so it's easy for customers to connect;
- make sure real-time information about different operators' services is available at stations and stops where customers are potentially connecting across services on their journey;
- better promote the TTC's interregional trip planner, and;
- locate busses on platforms by travel demand rather than by agency. If data shows many customers are connecting across specific GO and TTC routes, those buses should be next to each other at bus bays.

Participants discussed many of the Customer Experience Action Plan focus areas, particularly safety, trip planning, and real-time information. They also said that many of the focus areas overlap, pointing out that improvements to real time information and stop amenities would also improve safety, for example. Improving reliability and line management are key to improving customer experience, and the TTC shouldn't have a mentality that it's not possible to run service on time. One person said that, when vehicles are on time, the TTC's surface network is an "amazing service."

Safety

Several said the TTC is doing many good things to improve safety, citing the SafeTTC app and partnerships with City staff. They said the TTC needs to continue to think about all customers' safety, including those experiencing homelessness or mental health issues. Some initiatives (like increasing police or Fare Inspector presence) can decrease these customers' safety, so TTC should increase non-police-based initiatives — such as Community Safety Ambassadors and social workers — and continue providing de-escalation training. They said the TTC's approach should focus on providing support, rather than simply removing people.

Participants also offered suggestions on ways TTC could improve safety on the system, including:

- **Make the process of reporting safety issues or concerns simple.** TTC Special Constables typically won't respond to safety concerns at a surface bus stop or Access Hub because these are City properties.
- **Reduce the fine for non-payment of fare or reduce fares.** Fear of a \$400 fine could increase the likelihood a customer might respond poorly if confronted, which decreases the safety of all customers. TTC should be pushing for fare equity – it's not right that a parking fine is \$30 and a fine for fare evasion is \$400. *The TTC said it is exploring fare capping as one option to lower the cost for riders. TTC makes recommendations, but ultimately City Council determines TTC budget.*
- **Place phones or call systems in strategic locations** like bathrooms, which can be a refuge for customers looking to avoid someone threatening.
- **Improve radio and speaker quality and operator announcement scripts.** Customers need to know what's going on to feel safe. Operators should also communicate with customers if asked to step off a vehicle so that customers know how long they might be alone.
- **Increase service to attract customers back.** More customers can make the system feel safer.
- **Provide cooling to subway stations** to reduce environmental stress on customers.
- **Put the safety strips in more accessible locations.** They aren't easy to reach at the top of the train.
- **Provide more shade and seating at stops**, especially in the suburbs.

Trip planning and real time information

Participants said the TTC should avoid relying on actions that require cell phones and data plans, like QR codes or apps. Instead, TTC should focus on using screens at stations and stops to provide good, accurate information (including information about construction-related changes). *The TTC responded that, since the Customer Experience Action Plan is a five-year plan, it is planning for a timeframe in which cellular should be widely available. TTC's 2024 Annual Service Plan includes a focus on "doing disruptions differently," exploring technologies like e-ink displays to provide information.*

Participants said improving the accuracy of the TTC's Next Bus data feed should be a priority. The inconsistencies between the data feed and actual service "teaches" customers the TTC schedule is random. *The TTC said it is aware of issues with on-demand vehicles not appearing in apps and is working on solution.*

Cleanliness

Participants said most customers likely wouldn't think they can report cleanliness or maintenance issues. Whatever tools TTC uses to make reporting easier, it should make it obvious and clear that people have a right to report issues. TTC should do more proactive cleaning and maintenance, so the onus is not on customers.

Detailed summary of the evening Stakeholder Meeting

Three participants attended the evening session, all representing transit advocacy. In addition to discussing the 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan, they also talked about how these plans could and should connect to broader transit service improvements.

Feedback about the 5-Year Service Plan

General feedback

Some participants were concerned that the new 5-Year Service Plan appears to take a business-as-usual approach, with too narrow a focus on Express Bus Network and service integration (especially with a new mayor and TTC Board incoming). They said they would prefer to see a plan that explores alternative futures for ridership growth and service improvement in a post-pandemic world. They also said they would like to see some reflection on the previous 5-Year Service Plan, including how well it achieved its aims (and, where it did not, why not). *The TTC responded that the 5-Year Service Plan will cover more than the two topics that are the focus of this Stakeholder Meeting, and it will include options on how to accelerate investment in transit and lead to a higher ridership growth rate.*

TTC should also be careful when reporting statistics around ridership recovery. Averaging ridership across all modes might give the impression that the system is still recovering and that crowding is not an issue, but the bus network has had very strong recovery and some routes are running above 2020 levels. Finally, participants said TTC should be honest in reporting on how well its service meets existing standards: more transparency should lead to more informed and better decisions where service is needed.

Feedback about the Express Bus Network

Participants generally felt it was important for TTC to stick to its existing Express Bus Network standard, saying it's important that customers experience a noticeable difference between express and local service. When considering total trip time, TTC should also be considering the time it takes customers to get to the stop – time gains achieved by removing stops would likely be offset by the additional time it would take to get to a stop. Some said that, rather than removing stops or service, TTC should seek transit priority measures to relieve problem areas. Since it can take a long time for the City to implement transit priority (especially for an entire route), TTC should look to implement local fixes, such as:

- augmenting local service if express service isn't viable (for example on 941 and 41 Keele).
- installing signal priority for express busses (if the system can distinguish between express and local).

Feedback about fare and service integration

Participants said fare integration with GO will be very beneficial and presents an opportunity to get more cars off the road. To best capitalize on fare integration, TTC should provide both local and express service that gets customers closer to GO train service and that is timed to make connections with the GO schedule. It will be important to work out how to best bring TTC service to GO stations in a way that meets GO service while avoiding distorting TTC service for customers not transferring. It's good that TTC is exploring fare capping – if adopted, fare capping should also apply to people making cross-boundary trips across services.

Feedback about the Customer Experience Action Plan

Overall feedback about the Customer Experience Action Plan

Participants said that the Customer Experience Action Plan should identify dates and a budget. They also said the plan should address service quality: service is the main thing TTC is selling, and improved service should be at the core of the plan. Finally, participants said that, since some ideas require internet service, TTC should augment and expand WiFi service. Even once cellular service is available on the subway system, many customers may not have cellular data plans.

Feedback about safety

Participants said it is a challenge to ensure customers feel safe on transit—especially when it can be difficult to distinguish between people who pose a genuine safety risk and those who provoke psychological discomfort but pose no actual threat. It's a difficult but important challenge: without the distinction, there's a risk of taking heavy-handed security responses to all situations. Suggestions on how TTC could improve safety included:

- **expand the Community Safety Ambassadors program**, and;
- **increase staffing and focus on areas of known need**. For example, the 505 Dundas streetcar travels through some areas known to have disruptive passengers, but there are rarely extra staff on that route. Major transfer areas would also be good places to have more staff on hand.

Feedback about trip planning and real-time information

Several said that having more accurate vehicle location information is key, adding that customers don't trust next vehicle information anymore. Accurate real-time information is especially important during diversions since most regular customers likely don't plan their route. Other suggestions included:

- **There should be accurate real-time information at transit stations and stops**. TTC should not be relying on smartphones or apps for this core component of the customer experience. There should be more screens in stations and stops and more space dedicated to real-time information.
- **Information on next vehicle signs at bus stops should match the routes serving that stop**. It's very frustrating when a bus stop has a functioning next vehicle sign, but it isn't showing the routes that serve that stop because those routes have been temporarily diverted there.
- **TTC's website needs a re-think**: too much important information is difficult to find.
- **Announcements need to be clearer** (both in terms of information shared and audio quality) so that customers can understand the options available to them.
- **Bring more consistency to printed notices**. Sometimes there are plastic signs, sometimes paper signs, and the information shared can differ from sign to sign. Signs should be removed once the diversion they're communicating about is no longer in effect.
- **Improve overall service frequency** so customers are less likely to need to plan their trip.

Feedback about stop amenities

Participants suggested TTC focus on improving amenities at stops near hospitals, saying customers at these stops may need additional support. Specifically, TTC could locate these stops as close to hospital entrances as possible and make sure they have strong shelter from the sun, rain, and wind. Other suggested improvements to stop amenities included: heating, lighting, improved snow clearing, and retail and food vendors. Generally, TTC needs to pay close attention to stop surroundings, especially for temporary stops: the eastbound stop on The Queensway by St. Joseph's Hospital was in very poor condition and not well-signed for around a year.

Feedback about station amenities

Participants said they liked the TTC's ideas to provide more information at the mezzanine level of stations. They said they would like to see more benches at stations that are designed to encourage use.

Feedback about cleanliness

Some said they don't find cleanliness an issue but would appreciate having more staff around to report issues to. Participants weren't sure a QR code would be the best way for customers to report cleanliness issues; unless the QR codes are everywhere, customers might not see them when they need them. TTC needs something like a 311 to provide an easy way for customers to take a photo and submit a report.

Feedback about the engagement process

Participants said they appreciated the TTC's efforts to reach customers through Pop Ups. They suggested the team also consider hosting a Pop Up at Finch Station (since it is an important connection for cross boundary trips), Express Bus Network stops, and at gas station plazas along Steeles at Dufferin, Yonge, and Bathurst (since motorists tend to enter and exit these gas stations at dangerous speeds).

Appendix A. Afternoon Session Agenda

Stakeholder Meeting – Afternoon Session

5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan

Wednesday, August 9, 2023, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Meeting held online



Meeting purpose

To share and discuss draft focus areas in the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan.

Proposed agenda

2:00 Welcome, land acknowledgement, introductions, agenda review

TTC and Third Party Public

2:05 Part one: 5-Year Service Plan

TTC

Questions of clarification

2:15 Discussion: 5-Year Service Plan

1. How do you think we should adapt the Express Bus Network when we're unable to achieve travel time savings due to traffic congestion or stop frequency?
2. What opportunities should we consider to better integrate with other transit agencies and transportation modes?
3. How could we improve customer access to GO Transit services once fare integration is introduced? How and where could we improve cross-boundary trips?

2:45 Part two: Customer Experience Action Plan

TTC

Questions of clarification

2:55 Discussion: Customer Experience Action Plan

1. What are your thoughts on TTC's recent efforts to improve **safety**? Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve how customers report safety or security concerns?
2. Do you have any advice on how we could improve the experience of **planning your TTC trip**?
3. Are there any improvements you would suggest to enhance TTC's **real-time communication** with customers at different steps of the transit journey?
4. What are your thoughts on our current **stop amenities**? Are there any specific amenities or improvements you would like to see more of? At what types of stops would you like them?
5. How satisfied are you with existing **stations amenities**? What other amenities (if any) would like to see at TTC stations?
6. What are your thoughts on the level of **cleanliness** on the TTC? Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve how customers report cleanliness and maintenance issues?

3:55 Other feedback, wrap up, and next steps

4:00 Adjourn

Appendix B. Evening Session Agenda

Stakeholder Meeting – Evening Session

5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan
Wednesday, August 9, 2023, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Meeting held online



Meeting purpose

To share and discuss draft focus areas in the TTC's 5-Year Service Plan and Customer Experience Action Plan.

Proposed agenda

6:00 Welcome, land acknowledgement, introductions, agenda review

TTC and Third Party Public

6:05 Part one: 5-Year Service Plan

TTC

Questions of clarification

6:15 Discussion: 5-Year Service Plan

4. How do you think we should adapt the Express Bus Network when we're unable to achieve travel time savings due to traffic congestion or stop frequency?
5. What opportunities should we consider to better integrate with other transit agencies and transportation modes?
6. How could we improve customer access to GO Transit services once fare integration is introduced? How and where could we improve cross-boundary trips?

6:45 Part two: Customer Experience Action Plan

TTC

Questions of clarification

6:55 Discussion: Customer Experience Action Plan

7. What are your thoughts on TTC's recent efforts to improve **safety**? Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve how customers report safety or security concerns?
8. Do you have any advice on how we could improve the experience of **planning your TTC trip**?
9. Are there any improvements you would suggest to enhance TTC's **real-time communication** with customers at different steps of the transit journey?
10. What are your thoughts on our current **stop amenities**? Are there any specific amenities or improvements you would like to see more of? At what types of stops would you like them?
11. How satisfied are you with existing **stations amenities**? What other amenities (if any) would like to see at TTC stations?
12. What are your thoughts on the level of **cleanliness** on the TTC? Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve how customers report cleanliness and maintenance issues?

7:55 Other feedback, wrap up, and next steps

8:00 Adjourn

Appendix C. Participants

Afternoon Session

Stakeholder organizations

Aura Freedom International
Bike Share Toronto
The Centre for Active Transportation
Centennial College Students Association
CodeRedTO
Friends of Thorncliffe Park
Humber College
Lytton Park Residents Association
Toronto Environmental Alliance

TTC

Stephanie Simard Craig
Tania DeGasperis
Jasmine Eftekhari
Joanna Gao
Jason Genee
Matt Hagg
Mark Mis
Natashia Singh
Patrick Yutiga

Third Party Public

Khly Lamparero
Ian Malczewski
Stephanie Quezada

Evening Session

Stakeholder organizations

A Voice For Transit
stevemunro.ca
TTCriders

TTC

Stephanie Simard Craig
Jason Genee
Matt Hagg
Emma Kimmett
Mark Mis
Natashia Singh
Patrick Yutiga

Third Party Public

Khly Lamparero
Ian Malczewski