



Stakeholder Meetings Summary

TTC 2024 Annual Service Plan



Wednesday, June 28, 2022; 2:00 – 4:00 pm and 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Meetings held online

Overview

On Wednesday, June 28, 2023, the TTC hosted two stakeholder meetings for the second of two planned rounds of consultation about its 2024 Annual Service 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:

- **City-wide initiatives**, focusing on how the TTC plans and communicates about construction-related service adjustments, and
- **Area-specific initiatives**, focusing on planned key service adjustments related to the construction at Pape Station for a new Ontario Line interchange with Line 2, at Yonge and Steeles for a new station on the Yonge North Subway Extension, and in the King Street West area to renew City watermain and TTC streetcar track infrastructure.

The stakeholder group includes a broad range of transit-interested organizations with both city-wide and area-specific mandates. Across both sessions, 15 people participated representing 14 organizations. Also participating were staff from the TTC and Third Party Public, the third-party engagement team retained by the TTC to support the engagement process on the 2024 Annual Service Plan. See Appendix C for a full list of participating staff and organizations.

Third Party Public prepared this meeting summary, including sharing a draft with participants for review. This summary covers both sessions and includes feedback shared in writing up to a week after the meeting (see Appendix D for original written submissions). 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.

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.

General support for the TTC's approach to planning service adjustments due to construction. The TTC's thought process in planning construction-related service adjustments makes sense and seems to mostly consider the right things. The TTC's planning efforts could include more of a focus on identifying and advocating for transit priority (including signal priority and lane priority) to provide more reliable service.

Clear, consistent, and early communication are very important. The TTC should strive to get information out in advance as much as possible to avoid surprising people during their journey. It's very important that TTC's communications share the complete picture of what's involved in service adjustments in advance (for example, the location of any temporary bus stops) to avoid customer confusion during the construction period.

Ensure accessibility and ease-of-understanding when developing communications strategies and tools. The TTC should consider the needs of people with varying abilities when planning and communicating about construction, such as ensuring digital assets can be interpreted by screen readers used by people with low or no vision. Using minimal text and translating text into other languages would also help meet different customer communication needs.

Provide accurate, real-time information in easy-to-find places. For customers who learn of disruptions and adjustments while on their journey, it's important to have reliable, real-time information about what's changed and what options are available. Whether through transit apps or signage outside stations, customers need to know as soon as possible what the disruption is and what their alternatives are.

The TTC website and digital communication need improvement. While parts of the website are working well, information about service disruptions can be hard to find, organized in unintuitive ways, or inconsistent. TTC social media accounts have previously shared inaccurate information, too.

The key service adjustments for 2024 generally make sense, though some may be overly optimistic about road or bus terminal capacity. TTC should strive for transit priority to help make these service adjustments run smoothly, especially for the King Street West area, which has a very constrained environment. It's very important to consider ridership origins and destinations when routing service adjustments to make sure they reflect major destinations or travel patterns.

Detailed summary of the afternoon Stakeholder Meeting

Nine participants attended the afternoon session, representing organizations focusing on transit, cycling, academic institutions, and more. Much of the feedback shared in the afternoon Stakeholder Meeting focused on how the TTC communicates about service adjustments and disruptions, though participants also offered suggestions about how TTC plans its construction-related service adjustments and feedback about all three area-specific proposals. The project team received one email from a participant in the afternoon stakeholder meeting, whose feedback is integrated into the summary below.

Detailed summary of questions and feedback

Feedback on how TTC adjusts service due to construction disruption

Participants did not disagree with the factors the TTC said it considers when planning service adjustments due to construction. Some suggested additional things the TTC should consider, including:

- **Prioritizing transit signal priority at the outset.** Current construction-related streetcar diversions in the east end provided sub-par service in part because of the lack of transit signal priority (specifically at Queen Street East and Broadview Avenue). The TTC and City did get transit priority in place, but it was weeks after the diversion began and should have been in place in advance.
- **Providing clear pathways and navigation aids for people who are low-vision or blind.** Signage is not enough for low-vision or blind people, so TTC should make sure there are easy-to-navigate pedestrian paths and potentially have staff on hand (or trained construction workers) to help them navigate construction areas. It can be very disorienting if sidewalks are not where they're expected.
- **Providing sufficient notice and coordinating with other agencies.** For example, BikeShare needs three weeks' notice to remove a station, and Toronto Parking Authority also needs to know about any operational impacts resulting from any temporary loss of on-street parking.
- **Taking advantage of construction to boost ridership.** Since construction impacts automobiles, the TTC could consider using the inconvenience to drivers to encourage them to use transit. *TTC said that, in some cases, the same construction impacting automobiles impacts its vehicles since they share the same road. The TTC aims to offer an attractive option by providing frequent service on parallel streets.*

Feedback on how the TTC communicates about construction-related service adjustments

Participants shared advice on ways the TTC could improve how it communicates about service adjustments related to construction, including:

- **Prioritize communicating in advance of construction, including locations of temporary stops.** Communications about the recent Broadview Avenue construction did not mention temporary stops. While the TTC used hand-written signs and customer service agents to communicate about them after construction had begun, earlier explanations could have reduced customer confusion and frustration.
- **Provide more accurate data to Google (and other map services) about vehicle location.** These services are likely one of the main ways people learn about service changes, and it's frustrating when it's not accurate. *The TTC said that all digital map apps pull from the TTC's open data feed that contains static scheduled information and real-time location of vehicles scheduled on the route. When there are diversions or extra vehicles operate in addition to the scheduled service, this creates issues with predictions. TTC is testing the next generation of data feed that will be more responsive to day-to-day service adjustments.*
- **Share real-time information and status updates at street level.** Especially if there are disruptions to underground services, it's more helpful to get information at the street than in the station. *The TTC said it strives to provide information in unpaid areas at subway stations but understands it could do better.*
- **Communicate changes in languages used by communities that depend on affected transit routes.** For example, translating information about changes related to the Broadview Avenue construction to the East Asian population in and around Broadview Avenue and Gerrard Street East.

TTC said it provided some information in traditional Chinese in the East Chinatown neighbourhood and intends to roll out this type of communication in other communities in the future.

- **Consider all stages of the customer journey.** The communication needs for customers planning their journey are different from those already on a journey. For those planning their journey, the TTC's website is very confusing and it can be difficult to find information about diversions, even if you are looking on the page for a route that's currently affected. For those on their journey, maps help, but maps should integrate with other systems (like GO) since, to a customer, it's all one integrated system.
- **Consider showing the nature or future end state of the construction on maps.** For example, show the outline of what an under-construction new transit route will look like on the construction maps. Showing this information will both help customers understand what the work is, what the future benefits will be, and roughly how long it will take.
- **Ensure all graphics and images on the TTC's website have clear, descriptive text associated with them** so that people who are low-vision or blind can have a description read to them. *TTC said it includes alt text on all images, but that this text could be more descriptive. TTC also meets regularly with its Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit for advice on how to best meet different needs.*

After the meeting, the project team received some additional feedback about TTC communications, summarized below:

- **It's too difficult to find information about these projects on the TTC's website.** Many construction-related service adjustments are in the "Projects & Plans" section of the TTC's website, which is only accessible from the website footer: an area most are unlikely to find. Items in the "Project & Plans" directory do not link to the notices affecting a route, so, for example, a visitor reviewing the 512 St Clair schedule will not learn about upcoming work affecting it.
- **TTC's communications channels are inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate.** For example, the information shared by the @ttchelps Twitter account does not always reflect TTC Board Period service memos.
- **Recently announced changes for service on Kingston Road are an opportunity** for TTC to improve its communications efforts.

Feedback about key service adjustments

Stakeholders shared feedback about service adjustments related to three construction projects:

Pape Station / new Ontario Line interchange construction

Participants generally did not raise major objections to the proposed service adjustments related to the Ontario Line construction. Some shared concerns about bus terminal capacity, specifically concern that, once TTC restores service levels to pre-COVID levels, there may not be enough capacity to accommodate the increased service resulting from the proposed bus detour scenarios. Another concern was that necessary bus layovers may further reduce the already limited capacity of these bus terminals.

Steeles and Yonge intersection construction

Participants did not raise major objections to the proposed service adjustments related to the Yonge North Subway Extension construction. They suggested the TTC coordinate with the City's Transportation Services to get the word out to drivers about the upcoming construction and its impacts. *The TTC said it has a team whose job is to connect with the City (and others) about these types of efforts, and it will be doing so with this project.*

King Street West watermain and streetcar track construction

Participants shared some concerns and advice about service adjustments related to construction in the King Street West area, specifically:

- Concerns that TTC may be over-estimating the street capacity required to run the 63 Ossington and 29 Dufferin routes and that these routings may not be feasible. *The TTC said it shares some of the concerns about routing in this area, but the limited street grid does not offer many options.*
- Suggestion to look at removing the slow order under the overpass east of Atlantic Avenue – the slow order here will only make customers frustrated with construction disruption more frustrated.

- Suggestion to make the map clearer by zooming in more and cropping out much of the unused space north of Queen Street West.

Finally, participants said the TTC should host dedicated consultation for customers relying on these routes to avoid blindsiding them. Involve the local Councillor, host meetings and focus groups, and make sure to engage the large cohort of employees who work in the area. *The TTC and Third Party Public said that they are planning to host a focus group and pop up specifically in this area and have notified the local Councillor of the upcoming work.*

Feedback on about the Annual Service Plan and consultation

After the meeting, the project team received comments about consultation and the service plan. Specifically, this feedback said the TTC should be more consistent about which projects and service adjustments it announces and consults on. For example, the planned work for 512 St. Clair and the changes at Main Subway Station did not appear to have formal announcements or consultation. Referring to Annual Service Plan consultation specifically, this feedback also said it's important for there to be a connection between what TTC shares and discusses in its Annual Service Plan consultation, what it puts in its final report, and what manifests on the street. If there is a gap between what TTC consults on and what it presents in the final report, it can give a false impression that the TTC consulted on all aspects of its plan when it did not.

Detailed summary of the evening Stakeholder Meeting

Six participants attended the evening session, representing organizations from a student association from an academic institution, neighbourhood advocacy, transit advocacy, youth serving organization, and more. Much of the evening meeting's discussion focused on how the TTC communicates about construction as well as its specific proposals related to Pape Station and new Ontario Line interchange construction, though participants did share feedback about other topics, too.

Questions of clarification

Some participants had questions about topics outside the scope of the 2024 Annual Service Plan, including major initiatives (the upcoming decommissioning of Line 3) and how the TTC operates transit service more generally. These questions and the TTC's responses follow.

- Will there be a dedicated bus lane for the replacement buses after Line 3 is decommissioned? *The TTC said that yes, there will be dedicated lanes, and there are construction and engineering teams working to get the measures in place for the planned closure in November.*
- What causes vehicle bunching? With more resources, what strategies could TTC use to address vehicle bunching? *TTC staff said vehicle bunching is partly the result of mixing transit vehicles in with other traffic. With service still not operating at pre-COVID levels, the effects of bunching or other service disruptions can feel more acute – what might have previously been a 10-minute gap between buses could now be 20 minutes. With more resources, TTC could invest in more red lanes, signal priority at key intersections, and more hire staff to manage routes.*

Detailed summary of feedback

Feedback on how TTC adjusts service due to construction disruption

None of the participants raised major objections to how the TTC plans service adjustments in response to construction. In discussing TTC's overall approach, some suggested TTC make sure replacement service provides the same capacity as the service its replacing. Replacement buses for the 506 Carlton seem to run very infrequently, with wide gaps between vehicles, and they don't show up in transit apps, making trip planning unreliable. *The TTC said it considers ridership when planning replacement service, and accounts for the fact that buses are smaller than streetcars. Because construction impacts can be hard to predict and model, it can take a few months of operating adjusted service before the TTC can catch up to on-the-ground realities.*

Feedback on how the TTC communicates about construction-related service adjustments

When discussing how the TTC communicates about construction-related service adjustments, participants said some of the TTC's current approaches are working well. They complimented efforts like the prominent notices about diversions on individual route pages on the TTC's website, detailed diversion maps (for example, for the 506 Carlton), and videos explaining service adjustments (like the video done for the recent Broadview Avenue construction). They also offered suggestions on how the TTC could improve its communications about these service adjustments, including:

- **Get information out in advance.** One of the biggest issues is when people find out about service changes while on their trip.
- **Detour notices should be sturdy and in easy-to-find spaces.** Signs attached to poles with strings can be easily removed, so consider using space on transit shelters to share information. Posters in the advertising space on or notices in the space with the system map could be options. *The TTC said that, because it doesn't own the bus shelters, advertising on them can be cost prohibitive and require long lead times that aren't always consistent with construction schedules. It has also started using laminated signs attached with zip ties with the hope that they will last longer.*

- **Translate information into different languages.** For example, in Thorncliffe Park, translating information into Urdu would get the word out about changes. *TTC said it is trying to do more translation, especially in areas where languages other than English are concentrated. The website also translates via Google translate.*
- **Look at simplifying the service advisory section on the TTC website.** It currently merges many different types of service advisory, including construction-related changes and emergency disruptions.
- **Direct on-the-ground staff to busy areas,** including areas that aren't subway stations (since not everyone is travelling to and from the subway).
- **Use images, icons, and pictures** more than text in on-street signage, both to simplify communication and help non-English speakers.

Feedback about key service adjustments

Participants shared feedback about proposed service adjustments related to the construction at Pape Station, Yonge and Steeles intersection, and King Street West area. They said that, at a high-level, the TTC's approach to these diversions makes sense and that — across all projects — the TTC advocate for transit priority to the extent possible. Feedback about each project follows.

Pape Station and new Ontario Line interchange construction

Participants shared the following feedback about the proposed service adjustments related to Ontario Line construction:

- **Consider routing the 25 Don Mills and 925 Don Mills Express to Broadview Station.** It would likely make sense to run the express service on Broadview Avenue (which typically moves faster than Pape Avenue), and likely most customers on these routes are travelling downtown, so this routing moves them two stops closer.
- **A previous diversion of the 81 Thorncliffe Park to Donlands Station worked well,** except for travelling southbound at O'Connor Drive (where there was a lot of congestion). TTC could consider repeating that diversion as part of this Ontario Line construction.
- **Sending diversions to Coxwell Subway Station should be considered a last resort** since the added distance would add a significant time penalty to customers (especially without transit priority). If the TTC does send service to Coxwell Subway Station, consider avoiding O'Connor Drive and instead route service along Cosburn Avenue, which serves destinations used by the Thorncliffe community like the S. Walter Stewart library and Michael Garron hospital.
- **Simplify or clarify the maps.** Consider showing a map illustrating different combinations of routings rather than showing all routes travelling on all corridors. Also, the 56 Leaside route is missing from the existing routings map. *The TTC said it considered different ways of illustrating the routes, and decided on the current approach to help communicate all that routes might use any of the corridors throughout the construction period.*

After the meeting, the project team received some additional questions about Ontario Line construction, summarized below along with responses from the TTC.

- Will the 325 Don Mills Night bus be impacted by construction at Pape Station? *It will continue to operate on street as it does today.*
- Are any service adjustments for 88 South Leaside being developed? Is Metrolinx closing Beth Neilson Drive for Ontario Line construction?
- Are any bus stops being permanently relocated, consolidated, or removed as a result of Metrolinx's planned 2023 construction on Overlea Boulevard?
- *Response for the 2nd and 3rd bullet points: Metrolinx is responsible for communicating Ontario Line construction related details to the public. Once details and parameters of construction are finalized, the TTC will determine impacts to transit service and whether routing and stop changes are required accordingly. This information will then be communicated to customers as part of our regular planning process.*

Steeles and Yonge intersection construction

Participants said the TTC's proposed service adjustments related to the Yonge North Subway Extension made sense, adding a few suggestions:

- **Advocate for signal priority for the two routes running along Steeles Avenue.** With the intersection at Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue largely closed due to construction, signal priority will be important to keeping those routes moving.
- **It will be important to understand where people are starting and ending their journey** so that TTC knows whether these routings are serving important destinations like schools or employment areas.
- **Consider using alternative north-south streets** for the diversions of the express services, like Willowdale or Hilda Avenues. *The TTC said it hasn't ruled out using alternative routes but has decided against it so far due to concerns about community impacts from the additional buses running on these streets and potential operational challenges running articulated buses on smaller streets.*

King Street West watermain and streetcar track construction

Participants did not discuss the King Street West construction much, other than to acknowledge that it would be a difficult period for customers relying on those routes. They suggested the TTC work with the City to identify as much transit priority as possible, potentially even applying a similar treatment as the King Street Pilot on Queen Street West.

Appendix A. Afternoon Session Agenda

Stakeholder Meeting – Afternoon Session TTC 2024 Annual Service Plan (Round Two)



Wednesday, June 28, 2023, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
Meeting held online

Meeting purpose

To share and discuss the TTC's 2024 Annual Service Plan, including our approach to adjusting service due to construction, how we communicate about construction, and an overview of key service adjustments.

Proposed agenda

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

TTC and Third Party Public

2:15 Part one: approaches to construction and communication

TTC

Questions of clarification

2:35 Discussion: approaches to construction and communication

How we approach construction

1. What else (if anything) do you think we should be considering when adjusting service due to construction disruption?

How we communicate about construction

2. How do you get information about construction-related route diversions that impact TTC routes you take? Which do you prefer? What have you found confusing, if any?
3. What other suggestions do you have about how we can improve communicating service adjustments due to construction impacts to customers?

3:15 Part two: key service adjustments

TTC

Questions of clarification

3:30 Discussion: key service adjustments

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approaches to adjusting service?
2. Are there any things (major travel patterns, connections, or others) we should consider in planning these adjustments?
3. How clear are our maps of service adjustments? How could we make it them clearer, if at all?

3:50 Other feedback, wrap up, and next steps

4:00 Adjourn

Appendix B. Evening Session Agenda

Stakeholder Meeting – Evening Session TTC 2024 Annual Service Plan (Round Two)



Wednesday, June 28, 2023, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Meeting held online

Meeting purpose

To share and discuss the TTC's 2024 Annual Service Plan, including our approach to adjusting service due to construction, how we communicate about construction, and an overview of key service adjustments.

Proposed agenda

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

TTC and Third Party Public

6:15 Part one: approaches to construction and communication

TTC

Questions of clarification

6:35 Discussion: approaches to construction and communication

How we approach construction

4. What else (if anything) do you think we should be considering when adjusting service due to construction disruption?

How we communicate about construction

5. How do you get information about construction-related route diversions that impact TTC routes you take? Which do you prefer? What have you found confusing, if any?
6. What other suggestions do you have about how we can improve communicating service adjustments due to construction impacts to customers?

7:15 Part two: key service adjustments

TTC

Questions of clarification

7:30 Discussion: key service adjustments

4. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approaches to adjusting service?
5. Are there any things (major travel patterns, connections, or others) we should consider in planning these adjustments?
6. How clear are our maps of service adjustments? How could we make it them clearer, if at all?

7:50 Other feedback, wrap up, and next steps

8:00 Adjourn

Appendix C. Participants

Afternoon Session

Stakeholder organizations

Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Cycle Toronto
Lytton Park Ratepayers Organization
pointA
Sheppard East Village BIA
stevemunro.ca
Toronto Parking Authority
York University

TTC

Heather Brown
Ian Dickson
Jasmine Eftekhari
Matt Hagg
Dominic Ho
Laurence Lui
Kristjan Naelapea
Evan Saslove
Patrick Yutiga

Third Party Public

Khly Lamparero
Ian Malczewski

Evening Session

Stakeholder organizations

Centennial College Student Association
Friends of Thorncliffe Park
Leaside Residents' Association
Transport Ontario
TTCriders
Youthlink

TTC

Abram Braithwaite
Heather Brown
Jasmine Eftekhari
Ian Dickson
Matt Hagg
Dominic Ho
Kristjan Naelapea
Patrick Yutiga

Third Party Public

Khly Lamparero
Ian Malczewski

Appendix D. Feedback Submitted after the Meetings

The project team received two emails within a week following the meetings. The full text of both email follows. Other than removing personal identifiable information, the facilitation team has not edited these emails.

Email submitted June 29

I had a few additional questions for the planning team that are somewhat related to last night's topic that I am hoping you can forward along on my behalf.

1. 325 Don Mills Night Bus - Will it be impacted by construction at Pape Station? The 325 serves Thorncliffe Park Drive.
2. 88 South Leaside - Is Metrolinx closing Beth Neelson Drive for Ontario Line construction in 2024? Are service adjustments for the 88 being developed?
3. 2023 Metrolinx construction on Overlea Boulevard - Are bus stops being permanently relocated / consolidated / removed as a result? If so, where?

Email submitted June 30

I just thought I would add to my comments about consultation that the deck on the TTC Website about planned work on St. Clair is a classic example of “non-consultation”.

See <https://www.ttc.ca/about-the-ttc/projects-and-plans/512-St-Clair-state-of-good-repair-projects-and-third-party-works>

First off, I do not recall any announcement of this work. I get all of the alerts and press releases, and have seen nothing about this. The deck is dated May 25, 2023. Similarly there was a deck about the Main Station changes which I found only by browsing through the site, not by virtue of any outreach. It is unclear whether either of these have gone through a consultation process.

Second, this item, like many others, is buried in the “Projects & Plans” directory on the website which is only accessible from a footer at the bottom of every page, an area most users will never scroll to.

Third, items in this directory do not autolink to the list of notices affecting a route, and so there is no way that someone who just looks up the 512 schedule will even know that this is in the pipeline.

This is a perfect example of how TTC “communications” badly serves riders. Quite frankly, just fixing this type of problem and centralizing all notices would be a big help, but that would require major redesign of the website which, I suspect, is not in the cards.

The “Service Plan” process focuses on planning, and to a lesser extent on operations, but there is a gaping hole with customer information. Maybe the “Customer Experience” plan will address this, but that should not be a back-patting exercise, nor should it look at superficial “improvements” like waiting shelters with creature comforts. There are too many people at TTC, based on past experience, who think that “Customer Experience” is all about Wifi, places to buy a latté enroute, comfy shelters, but strangely not about being able to use the thing you are selling – service.

Clarification from TTC: The TTC intends to review pain points and gaps along the entire customer journey, including those related to customer information, as part of the Customer Experience Action Plan.

Another related problem is the frequency with which the folks running TTC’s info channels such as @ttchelps do not appear to know what is actually happen and give out wrong information. I get the Board Period service memos and sometimes appear to know more than TTC official reps about what is going on. Surely these memos go to the comms folks too.

With the just-announced changes for Kingston Road, I will be intrigued to see how good the posted info will be and how promptly it will show up at stops especially after a holiday weekend. I am glad that the problem with

inadequate running time and vast (over one hour!) gaps in 505 service will be addressed without waiting for a formal schedule change, but the execution may well be a problem. My experience with the existing 501/504 RAD buses is that they run in pairs and nobody is minding the store to space out service, a problem that afflicts many routes.

You can have as much “consultation” on service plans and construction projects as you like, but at the end of the day it’s the actual service that makes the difference. There is an increasing gap between the annual service plan exercise and what we actually see on the street. I really don’t want to see a report later this year that claims you have reached out to stakeholders on various aspects of service and construction plans when major items are notable by their absence from this process. It gives the impression that affected parties know about plans when in fact they were never asked.

I am sending this in as a response to the ASP consultation so that it is on the record in that process.