



TTC Line 3 Bus Replacement Study Resident Focus Group Summary

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Meeting held online

Overview

On Wednesday, October 27, 2021, the TTC hosted a resident focus group about its Line 3 Bus Replacement Study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place virtually.

This focus group, part of the TTC's second round of public and stakeholder engagement on the Line 3 Bus Replacement Study, was one of several ways the TTC worked to bring an equity lens to its engagement process by consulting with customers who live, work, or study in Scarborough and rely on Line 3. Recruitment of participants for the focus group was done in collaboration with the City of Toronto's Social Development and Finance Administration (SDFA) Division. To help recruit focus group participants, SDFA staff emailed community members in North and South Scarborough, asking anyone interested in participating to complete a brief online form. To support these residents' participation, TTC offered a pre-loaded PRESTO card with \$50 value.

In selecting participants, TTC, SDFA and Swerhun Inc (the facilitation team supporting the TTC's public and stakeholder engagement for the Line 3 Study) prioritized inviting interested community members that identified as:

- using Line 3 (either before or during COVID-19) and live, work, or study in Scarborough
- being a resident member of one of the two Scarborough Neighbourhood Planning Tables or a Local Champion
- having participated in another City of Toronto program, such as Partnership-Opportunities-Legacy program, a Neighbourhood Grants program, or a Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy activity
- not belonging to another stakeholder group engaged in this process

Scott Haskill and Eric Chu of TTC shared the presentation and responded to questions, and Khly Lamparero of Swerhun Inc. facilitated and took notes during the discussion. See Attachment 2 for the meeting agenda.

Swerhun Inc. prepared this focus group summary, sharing a draft with participants for review before finalizing it. The intent of this summary is to capture the range of feedback shared at the meeting; it is not intended to serve as verbatim transcript.

This summary includes three sections:

- Key themes in feedback shared at the meeting
- Detailed feedback
- Next steps

Key themes in the feedback shared at the meeting

The following themes reflect a summary of the feedback received from participants during the focus group. The remainder of this summary provides additional details regarding these, and other points participants shared.

- **Need to ensure that replacement service is safe, comfortable, and reliable for Scarborough TTC customers.** Many said the TTC needs to provide high quality bus shelters, ensure that customers can easily get between the stop and vehicle (especially in winter), and consider the safety of its customers (especially seniors and children) when planning for the replacement bus service.
- **Overall preference for Option 1 Hybrid Line 3 Right-of-Way to provide replacement bus service.** Participants generally agreed with the TTC's conclusion that using the Line 3 Right-of-Way would be the best option for providing replacement bus service, saying it would be the closest to existing service, provide the fastest and most reliable trip, and would be easiest for customers to understand.
- **Communicating with customers about changes will be essential.** TTC should learn from the installation of the RapidTO priority bus lanes (red lanes) on Eglinton Avenue East, where people were surprised and upset when TTC removed some stops. TTC needs to make efforts to let people know about these changes in advance, including by offering information in different languages and communicating through community networks.

Detailed feedback

Participants shared questions and feedback about the TTC's Line 3 Study and transit service in Scarborough more broadly.

Questions of clarification

Following the presentation and throughout the discussion, participants asked questions of clarification. Responses from TTC follow the questions.

Questions about the Options and Line 3 replacement service

For Option 1, would TTC be building ramps and driveways to get the buses on and off the right-of-way and to the stops? And will the stops be accessible?

Scott Haskill (SH): Yes, TTC engineers will work out how to best remove all the rails and electrical equipment and build driveways so that buses can get on and off the right-of-way to serve stops. All TTC buses are accessible, and the new bus stops will be designed to be accessible, too. Since the current Line 3 stations are not accessible, one of the benefits of the replacement bus service will be providing more accessible service than customers have today.

Do Options 2 and 3 have the same travel time?

Eric Chu (EC): Option 3, Midland and Brimley Couplet with Kennedy, would likely be a little faster than Option 2, Midland and Brimley Couplet, saving about 5 minutes each way.

What would the frequency of the bus service be? Will it be different between current service during on-peak (rush hour), off-peak, and weekends?

EC: The planned on-peak bus service would be about a bus a minute. Off-peak might be less, but not much; we want to make sure we're providing the same capacity as the trains, not less. Replacement buses would operate at the same times as the current Line 3 service.

What kind of buses are you planning to run for the replacement service, short or long?

SH: We will design the service so that it can run all types of TTC buses, including both standard and articulated (long) buses.

Are you thinking about using red bus lanes as part of the Line 3 bus replacement service, similar to what's on Eglinton Avenue East?

SH: They are being considered, but in our early review we don't think we need red lanes on Midland or Brimley – we think we can get enough benefit from things like queue jump lanes. Plus, there are a lot of driveways on both streets, which makes red lanes less useful in terms of helping buses move quickly.

Are you thinking about the potential adaptive re-use of McCowan Yard?

EC: Right now, we are thinking TTC would retain ownership of McCowan Yard. If we do, it could be a garage or office – we're not currently seeing it as a property that would be turned over to the City for adaptive re-use.

What is the planned opening date for the replacement bus service?

SH: We're not sure about the exact date yet, but our current planning is for Fall 2023.

Are you considering WheelTrans in the design of the route, and would you let WheelTrans use it? If yes, would WheelTrans use of the Line 3 Right-of-Way influence overall reliability?

SH: Yes, we are considering WheelTrans, and they would be able to use the Line 3 Right-of-Way. Their use of the right-of-way should not affect overall reliability since TTC typically provides enough space for them in route planning. There will also be enough room for them at bus stops separate from the regular buses.

How have you thought about winter? Line 3 currently shuts down a lot in the winter.

SH: We know that one of the challenges with Line 3 today is that it's not very reliable in winter. We think the bus service will likely be more reliable than the trains in winter. TTC route and stops receive priority snow clearing from the City in winter.

Will all the stops have bus shelters?

SH: Yes, all the replacement bus stops will have a shelter.

How have you considered safety, especially for seniors and children (both for the construction period and when the new service is running)? Snow has been a big safety issue since people have to climb snow banks to get between the stop and the bus after snow plows.

SH: For the construction period, TTC puts safety requirements into our contracts to ensure that any construction sites are managed with safety in mind. For the operation of the service, TTC will make all stops accessible and add much larger pads around them than before, which should create more space for snow storage. The City is responsible for snow clearing, so if you see large snow banks that are a safety problem, call 311 – the City is responsive to those types of calls.

Questions about bus shelters and transit in Scarborough more generally

Shelters have been removed without notice in parts of Scarborough (such as Midland and in Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park), but haven't been replaced yet, which affects customer comfort and safety, especially in rain and snow. When will the TTC replace these shelters?

SH: When a bus shelter is removed to accommodate construction, it is supposed to be replaced when that construction is done. We will look into these areas to find out when the shelters will be replaced.

Some bus stops have new shelters that are worse than the previous ones since they have a roof, but no sides. What is the reasoning behind that?

SH: The City changed its accessibility standards to ensure there's enough room for someone in a mobility device like a wheelchair. In places where you see a bus shelter that only has a roof, it's likely because the City has determined that a bus shelter with sides would create a barrier to a person using a mobility device.

Will you be bringing Next Vehicle Information signs to stops in Scarborough? In some places, Next Vehicle Information signs have been removed and not replaced as part of relocating bus shelters – including one stop where people have put a petition on the new shelter asking that the Next Vehicle Information sign be put back.

SH: We don't currently have a plan to install any more Next Vehicle Information signs because we do not have dedicated budget to expand this system. If a bus shelter that has Next Vehicle Information signs has been moved, the sign should be replaced at the new location unless there are significant challenges with getting power to the signs at the new location.

Why are the buses that drive in the red lanes on Eglinton Avenue East allowed to leave the red lane and mix with regular traffic? It doesn't seem fair that drivers are fined if they go in the bus lane but buses can go into drivers 'lane without consequence.

SH: If you see a bus leave the red lanes, it's probably to pass a bus in front of them, such as an express bus passing local service.

Feedback about preferred route options and service

Over the course of the focus group, participants shared their thoughts on which of the three replacement service options they liked and shared more general routing advice. For the three options:

- **Many participants agreed with the TTC's conclusion the Option 1 – Hybrid Line 3 Right-of-Way was the best option**, saying it is closest to the existing service in terms of routing and travel time, would be most convenient and simple for customers to

understand, makes good use of investment on existing infrastructure, and reflects a common-sense solution.

- **Participants had mixed opinions about the two on-street options.** Several liked Option 2, saying it would be more reliable, save time, and have fewer conflicts with other, existing bus routes. Others preferred Option 3, saying Midland Avenue and Brimley Road might not have enough capacity to handle the added buses, especially in winter, so routing buses off those streets as proposed in Option 3 could be better both buses and other road users.

Whatever option TTC chooses, participants said it would be important to provide service that is at least as frequent as today and 24-hour service, especially since many people work night jobs and use TTC to commute. *Eric said TTC has Blue Night service on Kennedy, Lawrence, and Ellesmere which operates when the regular service is not in service between approximately 1:30 am and 5:30 am, and that TTC will continue to look at ways to make changes to make sure service is useful and convenient for customers.*

Feedback about bus shelters

Participants shared feedback about the importance of bus shelters — both for Line 3 specifically and for TTC customers in Scarborough more broadly.

For the Line 3 bus replacement service, they said **TTC should make sure to provide good quality bus shelters**, including shelters that: are heated (like the WheelTrans shelter at Thorncliffe and Overlea); are bigger, large enough to accommodate many passengers and allow them to stay physically distant; have sides to protect people from wind; and have snow cleared regularly so it's safe to go between the shelter and the bus.

Feedback about safety

Participants said TTC needs to consider customer safety as part of the replacement service, with some saying safety should be a top priority. They suggested a number of ways to prioritize safety, including:

- **Better coordinating connecting routes**, especially at major intersections. At Eglinton Avenue and Don Mills Road, for example, if you have to connect to a bus, you have to cross several major streets. Since missing a transfer can mean a 30- to 40-minute wait for the next bus, some people run across the streets, which isn't safe, especially for seniors and children. *Scott said TTC strives to locate its stops at intersections with lights so that people do not have to cross busy streets without the protection of a traffic light. TTC is aiming to provide good connections at Line 3 stops so that transfers could happen in the stations, meaning customers would only have to walk across the station platform instead of crossing streets.*
- **Providing good snow clearance at bus stops** so that customer don't have to "climb Mount Everest" and risk slipping and falling to get between the bus and stop.

Feedback about communications and engagement

Several participants said they appreciated that the TTC was hosting this focus groups, getting customer feedback, and updating customers about changes well in advance. They said a process like this would have been helpful before the changes on Eglinton Avenue East, which they said surprised and upset many people, especially those that lost their local bus stops. They said the shutdown of Line 3 will likely be seen by many as another bad change imposed by TTC

on Scarborough customers, so it's important TTC do as much as possible to communicate in advance, including:

- Using the graphic that showed the travel time for a sample trip from Malvern to Kennedy Station, since that type of information helps people understand the changes and make decisions.
- Focus on communicating with people in apartments, like at Markham Road and Ellesmere Road, since many there take transit.
- Provide information in languages spoken in these communities, including Gujarati, Tamil, Urdu, Somali, and others.
- Use existing networks, like the Local Champions network, to help get the word out.
- Share information regularly on the TTC's website and social media, and particularly, by putting up posters at bus stops.

Other feedback

Participants shared other advice about the Line 3 Study, including:

- Support for running buses above ground rather than underground, saying underground tunnels are more dangerous due to climate change-related flooding.
- Consider adding WiFi to all Line 3 replacement buses and stops.
- If and when any infrastructure is no longer needed (like parking lots), make sure those lands are turned into public uses and benefits, like affordable housing.

Next Steps

Eric and Scott thanked participants for their time and for their feedback. Khly committed to sharing a summary of the meeting in draft with participants for their review before finalizing to ensure accurate representation of feedback shared at the meeting, as well as the presentation. She also encouraged everyone to take the online survey and promote it to their networks and described other mechanisms for providing feedback through upcoming pop-ups at Line 3 stations, translated toolkit and survey (available in Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Tamil) in both hard copy and online formats by request.

Attachment 1. Agenda

TTC Line 3 Bus Replacement Study Public Meeting

Wednesday, October 27, 2021

6:30 – 8:30 pm

Meeting held online



Meeting purpose

To provide an overview of the Line 3 Bus Replacement and Corridor Adaptive Re-Use Study and to share and discuss the results of TTC's recommended option for replacement bus service.

Proposed agenda

6:30 Land acknowledgement, welcome, introductions, agenda review

*Khly Lamparero, Facilitator, Swerhun Inc.
Eric Chu, Scott Haskill, TTC*

6:45 Evaluation results, short list, and recommended option

Eric Chu, TTC

Questions of clarification

7:15 Discussion

1. To what extent do you agree with our conclusion that the recommended option is a good approach for providing replacement bus service for Line 3?
2. Do you prefer either of the two options that would run before the recommended option is implemented? If so, which one, and why?
3. Is there anything else you'd like the TTC to consider?

8:25 Wrap up and next steps

8:30 Adjourn