

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: November 17, 2009

SUBJECT: FUNDING TO ESTABLISH ACCESSIBLE STREETCAR/LRV
PLATFORMS ON RONCESVALLES AVENUE

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Commission:

- 1) Approve the re-allocation of \$800,000 within the approved 2010-2014 Capital Program in order to allow improvements to the design and functionality of 14 innovative streetcar platforms which are to be built as part of the rehabilitation and redesign of Roncesvalles Avenue, between Dundas Street West and King Street West, as described in this report;
- 2) Forward this report to City Budget Committee for approval of this request, to be forwarded to City of Toronto Council for consideration of this in-year project scope change request to be addressed outside of the budget process;
- 3) Forward this report to Metrolinx, requesting that the aforementioned cost of this innovative shared transit-bicycle facility be funded through the BikeLinx program; and
- 4) Forward this report to Councillor Perks and the City of Toronto Transportation Services Division for information.

FUNDING

No funding was provided for this project requirement in the TTC 2010-2014 Capital Program which was approved as amended by the Commission on October 29, 2009. This project expenditure of \$800,000 would fall under the scope of program 3.3 Yards and Roads and will be added to that project in-year and included in the 2011-2015 Capital Program budget.

Funding of \$800,000 was included under Program 1.2 Surface Special Trackwork Replacement Program - category State of Good Repair / Safety as outlined on pages 45 to 48 of the TTC 2010-2014 Capital Program in 2010 for related work. However, that work must be deferred to at least 2011 to coordinate with City of Toronto timing for that work. This project can accommodate the 2010 cash flow required for the new scope work requirements of the 3.3 Yards and Roads project in 2010 (\$800,000).

Based on the TTC's current understanding of the City's new process requirements for such project changes, staff confirm that project cost and funding can be accommodated through a reduction in the scope of work under the Surface Special Trackwork Replacement Program in 2019 of \$800,000 to be financed from City debt.

BACKGROUND

The reconstruction of the streetcar tracks on Roncesvalles Avenue, between Bloor Street West and King Street West, has been planned for a number of years as part of the TTC's state-of-good-repair program for all of its assets. In the interests of economies of scale and minimizing neighbourhood disruption, the City of Toronto had been planning to reconstruct and upgrade the water and sewer infrastructure on this same section of street at the same time as the TTC would be rehabilitating its streetcar tracks. These projects are, therefore, planned to be done in unison.

These major civil works have presented the opportunity for the local Business Improvement Area (BIA) and local ratepayers groups to become involved in developing an innovative urban design for this lively commercial area, which would result in a more pedestrian-friendly, attractive, and environmentally-sustainable street. The TTC operates the 504 KING streetcar on this street – our busiest service, aside from the subways, carrying over 56,000 passengers per day – so TTC staff were heavily involved in the development and analysis of the various design options. TTC staff are supportive of this innovative initiative and want to ensure that the design incorporates features which will both set the stage to make the streetcar passenger loading areas on this street compatible with the TTC's new low-floor light rail vehicles, and improve the environment and comfort of these areas for customers boarding and alighting from these vehicles.

This report describes a small scope change which will accomplish these objectives, but which was not included in the original capital program and which, therefore, requires funding if it is to be implemented.

DISCUSSION

In support of the rehabilitation and re-invigoration of Roncesvalles Avenue, the City of Toronto has recently completed an Environmental Assessment Study to implement significant improvements to the public realm, transit, and cycling infrastructure on Roncesvalles Avenue between Dundas Street West and King Street West. Construction of this project was begun this year, and will be completed in 2010.

A major and unique component of the proposed public realm, transit, and cycling improvements is a widening of the sidewalk at transit stops. This widening – all the way out to meet the doors of the streetcar or light rail vehicles (LRV's) -- will allow transit customers to board and alight LRV's directly from the sidewalk without having to step down onto the street, cross a lane of traffic, and then step back up to the LRV, as they

must now. This will be a first in Toronto, and it will provide excellent accessibility once the new LRV's are in operation. These platform areas will be 30 metres long to accommodate the full length – all of the doors – of the new low-floor LRV's which the TTC has ordered. The direct boarding permitted by the sidewalk platforms will benefit over 8600 transit customers per day that currently board or alight at the 14 transit stops, and that number will increase over time.

The re-design of Roncesvalles Avenue had to accommodate all of the users of that road, including bicyclists. In order to do this, and recognizing that bicycles cannot be controlled if they fall into the "trough" of a streetcar/LRV rail, the widened sidewalk platforms at the stops have been innovatively designed to serve simultaneously as a shared accessible streetcar platform and bicycle lane. Such a shared-use facility, while new to Toronto, emulates similar successful design concepts already in use in several cities in Europe and elsewhere in North America. These widened sidewalk platforms will incorporate a continuous marked bicycle lane that ramps up and down at either end of the sidewalk/platform area. While waiting for a streetcar, customers would stand in the designated pedestrian use area to allow bicycles to move through the bicycle lane section of the platform but, when an LRV is at the stop, cyclists would stop behind the rear doors of the vehicle, as motorists must now, to allow passengers to safely board and alight the LRV, using the bicycle lane area as part of the platform. The wider sidewalks at the LRV stops will also provide an opportunity to expand and improve the environment for waiting customers, as well as for other pedestrians, through features such as:

- larger shelters;
- benches;
- street trees and plantings.

The renderings below illustrate the main design components as they might be implemented at the existing southbound stop on Roncesvalles Avenue at Howard Park Avenue. The first photograph shows the existing stop as it looks today. The following two graphics, one with an LRV at the stop and one without, show the proposed concept of the widened sidewalk/platform, bicycle lane, benches, and street trees.

In order to ensure that this innovative design for accessible streetcar/LRV platforms is functional and safe for TTC customers, TTC staff have determined that every platform should include these features:

- special surface treatments, which would clearly demarcate the pedestrian-only section of the platforms from the shared pedestrian-cyclist area of the platform, a feature of particular importance for visually-impaired customers;
- significantly-improved lighting, to keep these shared-use areas well illuminated at night for the safety of all users; and
- special signage, to inform both TTC customers and cyclists of their respective designated areas and responsibilities.

The cost of these enhancements for all of the full-length 30-metre-long platform areas which are to be built – a total of 14 in both directions – is estimated at \$800,000. Since the design for this project was (and is continuing to be) undertaken subsequent to the approval of the 2010-2014 capital program, there is currently no funding included for these enhancements. These enhancements represent a change in scope for the streetcar track rehabilitation on Roncesvalles which is in the capital program. Funding of \$800,000 was included under Program 1.2 Surface Special Trackwork Replacement Program - category State of Good Repair / Safety as outlined on pages 45 to 48 of the TTC 2010-2014 Capital Program in 2010 for related work. However, that work must be deferred to at least 2011 to coordinate with City of Toronto timing. This project can accommodate the 2010 cash flow required for the new scope work requirements of the 3.3 Yards and Roads project in 2010 (\$800,000).

It is recommended that the Commission approve this change of scope and the associated funding re-allocation, and that it request City Council to do the same. It is also recommended that the Commission request Metrolinx to fund the aforementioned cost of this innovative shared transit-bicycle facility through the BikeLinX program.

JUSTIFICATION

The City-TTC reconstruction and re-design of Roncesvalles Avenue will result in a more pedestrian-friendly, attractive, and environmentally-sustainable street. A major feature of this re-design will be shared-use LRV platforms – bicycle lanes which will allow transit customers to board and alight LRV's directly from the sidewalk without having to step down onto the street, cross a lane of traffic, and then step back up to the LRV as they must now. This will provide excellent accessibility once the new low-floor LRV's are in operation. The proposed change in scope and the associated required re-allocation of funding should be approved to allow this innovative design feature to be implemented properly.

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Roncesvalles at Howard Park – Existing Southbound Streetcar Stop



Roncesvalles at Howard Park – Proposed Southbound LRV Platform with Bicycle Lane



After

Roncesvalles at Howard Park – Proposed Southbound LRV Platform with Streetcars Serving the Stop