

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: September 30, 2010

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT - DOWNTOWN RAPID TRANSIT
EXPANSION STUDY (DRTES)

INFORMATION ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission receive this report for information.

FUNDING

This report has no effect on the TTC's operating or capital budgets.

BACKGROUND

Toronto City Council, in January 2009, as part of the Yonge Subway Extension debate requested that the TTC:

"commence the proper studies, including Environmental Assessments as required, to evaluate the merits of the Downtown Rapid Transit Line . . ."

In response to this request, TTC staff, in cooperation with City of Toronto and Metrolinx staff, have initiated a study of the need for additional rapid transit capacity into the downtown area including a review of the need for a "Downtown Rapid Transit Line".

Consultants were retained in April 2010 to undertake the *Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study (DRTES)*, and the first phase of the study is expected to be completed in early 2011. The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with a status update on the project.

DISCUSSION

The health and vitality of downtown Toronto is supported by, and depends on, an extensive transit network composed of:

- longer-distance commuter rail services provided by GO Transit;
- TTC subway system serving many short- and medium-length passenger-trips; and

- a network of surface streetcar and bus services providing additional local travel options to, and within, the downtown area.

At peak times, all of these transit modes are currently operating close to their maximum capacity, and congestion on the rapid transit network serving downtown Toronto is increasing.

The pattern of growth in travel into the downtown area for the past 25 years has been driven by two fundamental factors:

- a large increase in GO Rail passengers travelling from outside the City of Toronto to the major employment destinations in the downtown area; and
- a very large increase in multiple-unit residential units both within the downtown area, and immediately adjacent to the downtown, resulting in increased short trip-making both by active transportation modes (walking/cycling) and shorter-distance transit trips. The large increase in downtown residential development has also led to a substantial increase in off-peak direction travel, at peak times, from home locations in the downtown to employment destinations outside the downtown area.

Over the past five years, the TTC has implemented a range of programs that have significantly increased overall transit use in the City. Capacity improvements to the existing rapid transit service into the downtown are planned over the next several years, including the introduction of larger "Toronto Rocket" trains and the implementation of Automatic Train Control to allow for more-frequent subway service.

Expanding rapid transit capacity is a critical element in ensuring the continued health and vitality of the downtown area. The planned improvements to existing rapid transit lines into the downtown area will assist in responding to future growth, but there has been no comprehensive study of the adequacy of these current plans, or an assessment of additional opportunities to enhance rapid transit into the downtown.

Given the above, the purpose of the *Downtown Rapid Transit Expansion Study* (DRTES) is to:

1. Assess the need for additional rapid transit capacity to serve the downtown core, given the capacity improvements already planned by TTC and GO, and recognizing forecast land-use and ridership scenarios;
2. Assess alternative strategies to accommodate the forecast demand, including the costs and benefits associated with various scenarios composed of the following elements:
 - the construction of new rapid transit lines, such as, the previously-proposed Downtown Rapid Transit (DRT) line which is envisioned to operate from the Pape Station area on the Bloor-Danforth Subway, travelling south and west, into the downtown (between Queen Street and Front Street) and proceed westerly to Parkdale and, ultimately, to Dundas West Station;

- expanded GO Rail capacity (including additional GO stations in the City of Toronto) to serve Toronto residents;
 - improvements in streetcar services to enhance shorter-distance transit accessibility in the downtown;
 - fare, service, and other policy initiatives to increase downtown transit ridership that may be appropriate; and
3. If necessary, undertake the appropriate functional design and environmental assessment studies required to obtain approval for the construction of the recommended facilities.

The study is being undertaken in two phases. The first phase, which is being undertaken over a 12-month period, will provide an assessment of strategic alternatives and recommendations regarding the need for additional rapid transit facilities into the downtown area. Following public consultation and Commission approval of the conclusions of the first phase of the work, the second phase, if required, will be to undertake preliminary functional planning studies of the recommended transit facilities.

The technical aspects of the study related to demand forecasting and transportation capacity into the downtown area, and at Union Rail Station, are underway in close co-operation with City Planning and Metrolinx staff. City staff have developed, as a base, detailed forecasts of future population and employment by zone, consistent with the Provincial "*Places to Grow*" policy direction. Metrolinx has provided the study team with the "reference case" base network of transit services which they are using for their ongoing studies, which are being done concurrently, notably, the *GO Electrification Study* and the *Union Station 2031 Demand and Opportunities Study* (which is assessing the need and potential locations for additional downtown stations for GO Rail lines). The DRTES Study Team has agreed to use Metrolinx's reference network as the basis for assessing rapid transit deficiencies.

Policy options related to downtown development, and the issues and opportunities related to the balance between population and employment in the downtown area, are being developed. More population, and limited employment in the downtown area would limit the need for additional transportation capacity, but this approach may conflict with other City goals related to attracting more employment to the City. A discussion document is being prepared by the consultants on this topic and, ultimately, for inclusion in final reporting on the study. City staff are undertaking an overall review of the City's *Official Plan* over the next one-to-two years, and the work done for the DRTES will provide background analysis to feed into this review.

The results of the DRTES study will, to a great extent, hinge on the conclusions that come out of Metrolinx's *GO Electrification and Union Station Study*. If Metrolinx were to provide capacity on the GO Rail system for Toronto residents to travel downtown, and if they were willing to make this one of their policy objectives, then the need for additional downtown subway capacity would be reduced. Conversely, if the current situation continues, where most Toronto residents have limited access to GO Rail services to travel downtown, there will be a greater need for added subway capacity into the downtown

area. The Metrolinx studies are expected to be complete by year-end, and the conclusions and recommendations of these studies will be reflected in the DTRES Phase 1 assessments.

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