

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: June 8, 2011

SUBJECT: TTC REPLACEMENT OF STREETCAR TRACKS ON
QUEENS QUAY WEST

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Commission:

1. Endorse the TTC staff recommendation, as described in this report that, unless Waterfront Toronto can confirm they have approval for full funding for their Central Waterfront Revitalization project by the end of June, TTC staff be authorized to rebuild the streetcar tracks on Queens Quay West, in 2012, in their current location, to modern and safe conditions, noting that:
 - Waterfront Toronto's Central Waterfront Revitalization project calls for a multi-faceted rebuilding of Queens Quay West, including a slight relocation of the TTC's streetcar tracks to the south of their current location;
 - the TTC's streetcar tracks on Queens Quay West have reached a critical state of deterioration which has already resulted in one streetcar derailment, making it urgent that these tracks be rebuilt;
 - Waterfront Toronto does not currently have sufficient approved funding to undertake their Central Waterfront Revitalization project, and they are in the process of trying to get approval to transfer already-approved funding from East Bayfront-related projects to, instead, the Central Waterfront Revitalization project, in order to be able to coordinate that work with the TTC's time critical track reconstruction work, but may not have confirmation of this approval until October or November, 2011;
 - waiting for Waterfront Toronto's confirmation this late would cause very significant problems with respect to the currently scheduled rebuilding of the tracks on Queens Quay, including missing the 2012 construction season; and
2. Forward this report to Waterfront Toronto, the City of Toronto, and Metrolinx.

FUNDING

Funding for the Surface Track Replacement Program is included and set out on pages 41 to 43 of the TTC 2011-2015 Capital Program (Category – State of Good Repair) which was approved by City Council on February 23, 2011.

BACKGROUND

The streetcar tracks on Queens Quay West between Spadina Avenue and the Bay Street tunnel were built in 1989 and have been in service since 1990. They are worn out and are overdue for replacement because of their age, their now-outdated design, and the heavy use they have seen. The tracks cannot continue to be kept in a safe and operable condition. There is approved funding of \$5.3 million in the TTC's Capital Budget to rebuild the tracks using the TTC's current track construction design.

Over the last decade, Waterfront Toronto (WT), working with the City of Toronto, the TTC, and the community, developed a comprehensive plan to rebuild Queens Quay as part of its Central Waterfront Revitalisation initiative. The implementation of that plan in its entirety requires an estimated expenditure of at least \$80 million over-and-above the \$5.3 million contained in the TTC budget to rebuild the tracks. As of May 2011, Waterfront Toronto staff have indicated to TTC staff that they have \$48 million committed and approved for the revitalization project, and that they are continuing their efforts to secure additional funding.

This report presents TTC staff's recommended action in light of the urgency of the track rebuilding and the ongoing uncertainty of Waterfront Toronto's funding situation.

DISCUSSION

The streetcar tracks on Queens Quay are a key link in Toronto's streetcar network. They are used by the 510 SPADINA and 509 HARBOURFRONT routes, and provide direct access for streetcars to Union Station via the underground Bay Street streetcar tunnel.

More than 4-million customer-trips are made on these tracks each year and, as with other TTC streetcar routes, ridership on these two routes has been increasing as residential development on Spadina Avenue and on Fleet Street adds more people to the area. The tracks provide the only direct streetcar access to Union Station and, therefore, are also an important regional asset.

The tracks were built in 1989 and have been in use since June 1990. They were not built to a track design that is as robust as is built today and this, combined with the heavy use they have seen, has resulted in the tracks now being well past their economic life. They should have been replaced by 2009, but TTC staff agreed to delay this replacement so that Waterfront Toronto could complete its plan for a revitalised Queens Quay and so the track

replacement could be made consistent with Waterfront Toronto's plan. Temporary repairs have been conducted on the tracks on several occasions in the past few years, most recently in April 2011 after poor track conditions caused a streetcar derailment. This work has kept the tracks operable for the short term. Their age and continued deterioration, however, means that the tracks cannot continue to be maintained in a safe and operable state. Like all important transit assets, they must be rebuilt when they are worn out.

Funding of \$5.3 million is available in the TTC's 2011-2015 Capital Program to rebuild the tracks to the TTC's latest streetcar track standards which will result in a quiet, robust, cost-effective track that will last at least 25 years. The TTC's budgeted funding is sufficient for this work which will take approximately 12 weeks to complete. From the TTC's perspective, this would be a routine track replacement project, with low technical risk and low probability of budget overruns.

Waterfront Toronto's Central Waterfront Revitalization plans would result in an ambitious makeover of Queens Quay. Continued streetcar service is a key part of the plan and the re-urbanization of the Central Waterfront and adjacent East Bayfront areas. Under the revitalization plan, the tracks would be relocated slightly to the south, and the alignment of the tracks and overhead, the surface paving treatment, curb design, and passenger platform design would also change compared to the present tracks. These changes also require additional funding on top of what the TTC has already budgeted for in-kind track replacement in the current location or in Waterfront Toronto's preferred location.

TTC and Waterfront Toronto staff have been in discussion about this issue for several years. Since 2010, it has been known that Waterfront Toronto does not have funding available in the near term to build the revitalized Queens Quay West. Owing to the already-deteriorating state of the tracks on Queens Quay West, the reconstruction of these tracks was initially included in the TTC's 2009 track replacement plans but, on two occasions, most recently in early 2010, TTC staff pushed the project off (now to 2012) to give Waterfront Toronto more time to resolve their funding shortfall.

As noted above, we are now at the point where the replacement of the tracks must be done during the 2012 construction season. Medium or long-term replacement with buses is not an option because: (a) buses cannot operate in the Bay Street tunnel; (b) alternative at-grade routings would provide much-less reliable service and a much-poorer connection to Union Station; and (c) buses would not be able to carry the future projected ridership along Queens Quay.

Waterfront Toronto staff have indicated that they are in discussions with their funding partners to reallocate funds from other WT projects to fund the Queens Quay West work. As of the preparation of this report (June 1), there had been no firm commitment that this funding will be secured in time. Additionally, Waterfront Toronto has not been able to confirm the total cost and, therefore, the funding requirements to undertake the complete revitalization project. TTC and City staff must finalize the technical design of the track-rebuild and prepare and issue the construction and tender documents and, to do this, they must know what alignment is going to ultimately be built. This work must begin in June 2011 in order to be ready in time for construction in March 2012. If Waterfront Toronto does not confirm its funding situation this month, and the TTC and City Technical

Services staff are forced to wait until October or November or later, then this significant preparatory work cannot proceed, construction will not be possible as planned, and streetcar service will have to be removed from Queens Quay by next summer. This is not an acceptable situation for the TTC or its present and future customers.

It is, therefore, recommended that, unless Waterfront Toronto can confirm full funding availability by the end of June, the Commission authorize that work begin on rebuilding the streetcar tracks on Queens Quay, between Spadina Avenue and the Bay Street tunnel, in their current location, in 2012, using the funds available in the TTC capital budget.

In the future, if Waterfront Toronto is able to secure funding for the Queens Quay revitalization, it would not be necessary to tear-up or reconstruct the tracks again. The essence of their project could be implemented with relatively minor changes, with the TTC's tracks in their current location. The changes would be: (a) the roadway to the north of the tracks would have to be a westbound-only two-lane roadway, instead of the envisioned two-way two-lane roadway; and (b) the need to build streetcar platforms and left-turn lanes as part of the one-way street would require minor road widenings on the north side at specific intersections. However, the spirit and intent of the project would be achieved with the one-way street design.

SUMMARY

Unless Waterfront Toronto can confirm its full required project funding this month, the TTC should commence work on rebuilding the tracks on Queens Quay in their existing location in order to continue necessary and vital streetcar service in this major corridor.

May 25, 2011
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