

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2012

SUBJECT: STUDY OF EFFECTS OF STREETCAR RIGHT-OF-WAY
ON ST. CLAIR CORRIDOR - UPDATE

ACTION ITEM

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be forward to Councillor Joe Mihevc for information.

FUNDING

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

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of March 30, 2012, the Commission received a communication from Councillor Joe Mihevc, requesting a third-party review of the *St. Clair Transit Improvement Project*. The Commission approved a motion by Vice-Chair De Baeremaeker that staff report back on the feasibility of conducting an independent third-party, comprehensive review of the impact of the project, post-construction, and that the staff report include the cost of undertaking this comprehensive review.

This report provides an update on the status of this request.

DISCUSSION

When the TTC's draft 2012 Operating Budget was being prepared, funding was set aside to undertake a study of the effects of the streetcar right-of-way on the economic, commercial, and social environment of the St. Clair Avenue West corridor. However, owing to budgetary pressures resulting from the City of Toronto's cost-reduction initiative, funding for that study was eliminated from the 2012 operating budget. Therefore, undertaking such a study at this time would require special Commission approval of an unbudgeted expenditure.

In the absence of funding, and respecting the ongoing requirement for all City departments and agencies to constrain funding to the greatest extent possible, rather than issuing a request for proposals for the study, TTC staff plan to issue a request for information from

consultants with previous experience with this type of analysis. This would allow us to obtain a better understanding of the scope and options related to undertaking such a study with no pre-conceived notion regarding the cost of the study. The proposed purpose and objective of the study is to assess the longer-term consequences attributable to the streetcar right-of-way, as measured through a large number of variables including, but not limited to:

- land use
- property values
- commercial and retail viability
- safety
- accessibility
- quality of transportation by all modes
- community cohesion
- liveability

More detail regarding the purpose and scope of this study is presented in the attached appendix.

In the interests of cost containment, TTC staff are also exploring the pros and cons of having the research project undertaken by one of Toronto's major universities such as Ryerson University, University of Toronto, or York University, through an appropriate individual faculty or inter-disciplinary team involving economics, city planning, or business, instead of having the study done by a major consulting company. Such an arrangement would be of significant real-life research interest to such institutions, and might cost less than if done by a major consulting company. However, a report done in this way might have less credibility or authority than one done by a major consulting company.

Under normal circumstances, it would be premature to undertake a study of this nature so soon after completion of the project. The St. Clair streetcar right-of-way was opened in its entirety only two years ago and, the project is still undergoing correction of deficiencies and construction errors. If time permitted, it would be preferable to undertake this study after the local economy and businesses have had more time to re-establish previous business patterns and to benefit from newly-established business and customer relationships. Notwithstanding, there is a current interest in the effects of the establishment of the streetcar right-of-way, and undertaking this study at this time would provide factual and impartial information to address these interests.

Staff will report back to the Commission when they have obtained more-complete information on possible study workplans and costs.

September 6, 2012
11-31-80

Attachments: Appendix 1: Preliminary Outline: Post-Project Assessment of
St. Clair Streetcar Right-of-Way

APPENDIX 1:

Preliminary Outline: Post-Project Assessment of St. Clair Streetcar Right-of-Way

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the relevant impacts attributable to implementation of a dedicated streetcar right-of-way on St. Clair Avenue West.

Background

For any transportation undertaking in well-established urban areas, the disruption associated with construction typically generates considerable controversy over the tradeoffs between those *actual* disadvantages and the *expected* long-term advantages and disadvantages. Short-term business losses and community disruption experienced at the local scale during construction are real, whereas expected longer-term benefits on a broader scale may seem more speculative.

The controversy over real short-term 'pain' and anticipated long-term 'gain' is hardly a new issue. As far back as Toronto's first subway, the experiences of those adversely affected by implementation of that major project were argued as justifiable by what was expected to be greater long-term 'gain' to the broader community. Today, few, if any, would question the value of decisions taken at that time. (Short-term impacts, however, were sufficiently severe as to influence both planning and methods of construction for all subsequent underground transit expansion in Toronto.)

For the recently-completed St. Clair streetcar right-of-way project, many view the final product favourably, but others question whether the completed project represents an actual improvement over what previously existed in terms of the viability of local businesses, land values, traffic congestion, quality of transit service offered, and the general character of the community.

An objective and comprehensive analysis of the positive and negative effects of the completed St. Clair streetcar right-of-way project would provide a useful and factual basis for informed discussion of the project, as well as perspectives for assessing the value of implementing similar projects elsewhere in Toronto.

Scope of the Project

Consequences associated with implementation of the St. Clair streetcar include those experienced during construction but, more importantly, the long-term and lasting effects after the project is completed.

Longer-term consequences attributable to project completion and implementation may include potential changes in:

- land use,
- property values,
- commercial and retail viability,
- safety,
- accessibility,
- quality of transportation by all modes,
- community cohesion, and
- livability.

This list is illustrative and not exhaustive, and is intended to be indicative of the range of relevant consequences to be assessed by the successful consultant.

The main objectives are first, to identify, and second, to quantify and assess the full range of post-project consequences for use in a comprehensive evaluation of the completed project. The major thrust of the analysis should focus on a comparison of pre-project conditions and post-project experiences and expectations.

Defining the area of impact affected by implementation of the St. Clair streetcar improvement project is integral to this evaluation.