

# TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

**MEETING DATE:** September 27, 2012

**SUBJECT:** TRAFFIC ISSUES ON ST. CLAIR AVENUE WEST, BETWEEN  
OLD WESTON ROAD AND KEELE STREET

## **ACTION ITEM**

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Commission forward this report to Councillors Palacio and Nunziata, and Deputy City Manager John Livey, noting that:

- as part of their Georgetown South Project, Metrolinx is making significant modifications to the railways in the area adjacent to the intersection of Junction Road and Old Weston Road, which is requiring periodic, long-term closures of Junction Road;
- when Junction Road is closed, many of the roughly 7,000 vehicles that use that roadway on a daily basis to travel between Keele Street and Old Weston Road are, instead, using St. Clair Avenue West, and this has created significant additional congestion and delays to traffic on that section of St. Clair Avenue;
- TTC staff have been working with City Transportation staff, who are leading the assessment and implementation of ways to improve this traffic congestion problem in the near term; the various measures under consideration are summarised in this report; and,
- City staff plan to also conduct an Environmental Assessment of alternative ways of creating additional east-west traffic capacity in this area in the longer term, including the construction of a new east-west roadway across the railway in this area, or widening the existing rail overpass on St. Clair Avenue to allow additional east-west traffic lanes to be constructed on that roadway.

### **FUNDING**

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

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of February 29, 2012, the Commission requested a report on a motion from then-Commissioner Caesar Palacio that TTC staff:

“Work with City Transportation staff on finding modifications to affect permanent solutions to relieve congestion and improve health and safety issues on St. Clair Avenue West, as follows:

- a) Looking at available technologies to prioritize streetcar movement within the section between Old Weston Road and Keele Street/Weston Road, including the stretch beneath the railway overpass.
- b) Provide a plan that would allow that section of road to be shared by all users.”

This report provides an update on the work to date on this issue.

## **DISCUSSION**

In early 2012, Councillor Caesar Palacio advised both the City of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission of significant traffic congestion problems on St. Clair Avenue West between Keele Street and Old Weston Road. He asked that this problem be investigated and, among other things, consideration be given to allowing general traffic to operate on the St. Clair streetcar right-of-way on this section of roadway because the road narrows to only a single traffic lane in each direction, outside of the streetcar right-of-way, under the railway overpass that is used by GO, VIA, CN and CPR trains.

City and TTC staff investigated this area and confirmed that there are significant traffic problems in this area during peak periods which were not present when the St. Clair streetcar right-of-way began operation. These periods of severe increased congestion are due to the closure of Junction Road, which crosses the railways a short distance to the south of St. Clair Avenue West.

As part of the Georgetown South Corridor work, Metrolinx has had to close Junction Road, east of Old Weston Road, in conjunction with the West Toronto Diamond Grade Separation project that includes a new rail overpass of Junction Road. Junction Road has to be closed for several months at a time to allow this work to be completed, and these lengthy closures are expected to continue through 2013.

There are 7,000 vehicles that use Junction Road on a typical weekday to travel between Keele Street and Old Weston Road and, when Junction Road is closed, a large percentage of these vehicles are using St. Clair Avenue West as a travel alternative. In peak periods, this extra traffic causes the demand on that section of St. Clair to exceed the available capacity, which results in significant traffic delays.

City staff are leading an investigation of ways to mitigate this congestion. They are also exploring two additional concerns, unrelated to the congestion issue: the restricted space available for southbound motorists on Old Weston Road who are making the right turn onto westbound St. Clair Avenue West, and the issue of left-turning motorists, on occasion, mistakenly entering the streetcar right-of-way when turning onto St. Clair Avenue West from Old Weston Road or from Keele Street.

A public meeting was held to discuss these issues on April 16, 2012, hosted by Councillors Palacio and Nunziata. At that time, staff explained that the focus needs to be on improving the operation of the intersections of St. Clair Avenue West with Keele Street and Old Weston Road. City and TTC staff advised that the suggestion that general traffic be permitted to share the streetcar right-of-way is not a viable solution to the traffic problems in this area. The complications of getting traffic onto, and then off-of the streetcar right-of-way, in the short section between Old Weston Road and Keele Street, would further complicate the traffic operations in this area and present safety concerns.

City Transportation Services have implemented the following changes:

1. new, state-of-the-art traffic signal controllers have been installed at these two intersections, and the signal timings have been adjusted to give additional green time to traffic on St. Clair Avenue West;
2. pavement markings and signage have been added to make it clearer to motorists that the single traffic lane under the railway overpass expands to two through-lanes on the eastbound approach to Old Weston Road, and on the westbound approach to Keele Street. There are, at present, too many motorists who remain in the outer through-lane when travelling through these intersections, and the curb lane is significantly underutilised; this has reduced the through-put of traffic at both intersections; and
3. guidelines have been painted within the Keele and Old Weston intersections to direct left-turning motorists to turn into the nearest general traffic lane, to address the problem of some left-turning motorists mistakenly turning into the streetcar right-of-way.

The following additional measures are to be implemented in the near-term:

1. in 2013, City staff plan to lengthen the eastbound curb lane on the approach to Old Weston Road so that the single traffic lane under the railway overpass expands to two through-lanes further in advance of that intersection. This will encourage more-even traffic volumes in both lanes; and
2. modifications will be made to improve the turning radius for large, southbound vehicles on Old Weston Road that make the right turn onto St. Clair Avenue. This will include relocation of a traffic pole on the northwest corner of that intersection to place it further from the roadway and, potentially, minor modifications to the leading

edge of the westbound streetcar platform on the west side of that intersection to provide a larger turning radius for these right turns.

In order to identify potential major improvements to the traffic capacity in this area in the longer term, City staff will be initiating an Environmental Assessment Study of ways to increase the number of east-west traffic lanes across the railway corridor in this vicinity. The study will examine the possibility of widening the railway overpass bridge to allow additional traffic lanes to be constructed on this section of St. Clair Avenue West, as well as the alternative of constructing another east-west roadway across the rail corridor, in addition to the crossings now provided by Junction Road and St. Clair Avenue West.

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August 23, 2012  
11-31-42