



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Park Lawn Streetcar Loop

<b>Date:</b>	November 9, 2015
<b>To:</b>	TTC Budget Committee
<b>From:</b>	Chief Executive Officer

### Summary

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This report provides an update on the status of the proposed new streetcar loop at Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard West. City Planning staff have been consulted on this report, and are in agreement with its contents.

Provision of a streetcar loop at Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard West will not be required for use by 501 Queen streetcars once the approved ten-minute-or-better service is fully implemented, because this initiative will bring the desired higher level of service as far west as, and beyond, the Humber Bay Shores area. The initiative extends the existing scheduled Neville-to-Humber branch west to Long Branch, thus eliminating the need for a turn-back loop at Park Lawn.

The Park Lawn streetcar loop might still be needed as part of Metrolinx's longer-term Waterfront West LRT project, and this requirement is expected to be reviewed further in the context of the City's recently-approved Waterfront Transit "Reset" initiative, and the Transportation Master Plan for the Park Lawn/Lake Shore area that City Planning is about to undertake.

Shorter-term actions to improve streetcar operations are possible in this area including:

1. Implementation of the approved dedicated right-of-way on Lake Shore Boulevard West, between Humber Loop and Park Lawn Road, once the necessary property acquisition is complete. The timing of this acquisition is dependent on redevelopment of the remaining sites in Humber Bay Shores;
2. Electrification of the west-to-north streetcar track switch at Kipling Loop in order to reduce delays associated with the use of this loop;
3. Extension of the existing dedicated streetcar right-of-way on The Queensway east from Glendale Avenue to Roncesvalles Avenue, with associated improvements to streetcar platforms and intersection operations. The preparatory work for this is currently underway jointly by TTC and Toronto Transportation Services;

4. Improvement to the conditions and environment of the customer waiting area at Humber Loop, and investigation of ways to make this loop more functional for both customers and transit operations; and
5. Study of the feasibility of implementing a Roncesvalles-style street design on Queen Street, between Roncesvalles Avenue and Dufferin Street, in order to reduce streetcar delays and improve service reliability.

## **Recommendations**

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### **It is recommended that:**

1. The Park Lawn Streetcar Loop be removed from the TTC's Capital Budget because it is no longer required for scheduled TTC service;
2. TTC staff undertake the following studies, in consultation with City staff and Metrolinx, as appropriate, to improve streetcar service to the Park Lawn/Lake Shore Boulevard West area:
  - a. Continuation of work already underway with City Transportation Services to improve streetcar operations at the Queensway/Roncesvalles/Queen intersection;
  - b. Improvements to conditions and environment of the customer waiting area at Humber Loop, and investigation of ways to make this loop more functional for both customers and transit operations;
  - c. Electrification of the west-to-north track switch on Lake Shore Boulevard West and Kipling Avenue to reduce delays associated with use of the Kipling Loop;
3. City staff undertake the following studies, in consultation with TTC staff, as appropriate, to improve streetcar service to the Park Lawn/Lake Shore Boulevard West area:
  - a. Timing and costs associated with implementing the already-approved exclusive streetcar right-of-way on Lake Shore Boulevard West between Humber Loop and Park Lawn Road;
  - b. Feasibility of implementing a Roncesvalles-style street design on Queen Street West, between Roncesvalles Avenue and Dufferin Street, to reduce streetcar delays and improve reliability; and
4. The Board forward this report to the City Clerk in response to City Council's request from its meeting on March 10-11, 2015, to the City Planning and Transportation Services Departments, and to Metrolinx.

## **Financial Summary**

Removing the Park Lawn Loop from the Capital Budget will reduce the unfunded budget by \$17 million (\$2013). This loop is no longer needed because of the approved and funded service improvements on 501 Queen, which will achieve the sought-after higher level of service on Lake Shore Boulevard west of Humber Loop.

The studies in Recommendation 2 are being, or would be done by TTC staff in consultation with City and Metrolinx staff, as appropriate. The cost of the study pertaining to possible improvements to Humber Loop is estimated at \$100,000 and is included in the TTC's proposed 2016 Operating Budget. The improvements associated with Recommendation 2a (Queensway/Roncesvalles/Queen intersection) are undergoing engineering work presently, and the costs are expected to be covered jointly by the TTC and the City in their respective 2017 capital budgets. The studies referred to in Recommendation 3 would be under the jurisdiction of the City, who would be responsible for covering any associated costs.

The Chief Financial & Administration Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## **Accessibility/Equity Matters**

The implementation of ten-minute-or-better service on the whole 501 Queen route, including west of Humber Loop, starting in January, 2016, will provide more-frequent service to South Etobicoke by 2016, which will make it easier and more convenient for local residents to use transit. This supports the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy of making transit more accessible and attractive to everyone. The conversion of the 501 Queen route to the new low-floor streetcars, planned for 2016 -2017, will make this service accessible, which supports the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) objective of more-spontaneous travel options for customers with disabilities.

## **Decision History**

At its meeting on September 15, 2015, the Budget Committee received correspondence directed to it by the Board,

[http://www.ttc.ca/About\\_the\\_TTC/Commission\\_reports\\_and\\_information/Committee\\_meetings/Budget/2015/September\\_15/Reports/City\\_Council\\_Decision\\_in\\_Consideration\\_of\\_2015\\_Budgets.pdf](http://www.ttc.ca/About_the_TTC/Commission_reports_and_information/Committee_meetings/Budget/2015/September_15/Reports/City_Council_Decision_in_Consideration_of_2015_Budgets.pdf)

conveying a motion from City Council, requesting the CEO to report on both the proposed Park Lawn Loop and the possibility of a dedicated streetcar right-of-way between St. Joseph's Health Centre and Exhibition Place, in the context of the TTC's 2016 Capital Budget.

## **Issue Background**

An expansion of the existing Park Lawn bus loop, located at Park Lawn Road and Lake Shore Boulevard West, to accommodate streetcars, was initially proposed to serve as the western terminus of the Waterfront West LRT (WWLRT) project. This loop was more recently proposed as a Phase 1 terminus for the proposed WWLRT which was to extend to Long Branch Loop at the Mississauga/Etobicoke boundary and, possibly, beyond.

Separately from the WWLRT, an expanded Park Lawn Loop was also proposed to be the western terminus of the scheduled shorter branch of the 501 Queen route in order to bring more-frequent service to the developing Humber Bay Shores neighbourhood located on the Etobicoke waterfront between Humber Loop and Park Lawn Road. Despite the continuing redevelopment and growth of the Humber Bay Shores area, construction of the new loop, originally proposed for 2010, has been postponed year after year due to capital funding constraints.

In 2010, then-Mayor Ford directed that work be suspended on all planned light-rail lines, including the WWLRT, whose design included both an exclusive right-of-way west from Exhibition Loop to Long Branch Loop, and the proposed Bremner Boulevard right-of-way between Exhibition Loop and Union Station. Responsibility for the project was subsequently transferred to Metrolinx. However, the Park Lawn Loop expansion remained as an “improvement” project in the TTC’s Capital Budget due to its potential use by the 501 Queen streetcars, with or without the WWLRT.

## **Comments**

### *Park Lawn Loop*

The 501 Queen streetcar route provides service as far west as Long Branch Loop seven days per week, 24 hours per day. Half of the service is scheduled to turn back east at Humber Loop during all time periods, except overnight, when all service (every 30 minutes) travels between Neville Loop in the east and Long Branch Loop in the west. Scheduled service frequencies east of Humber Loop, range from approximately every 5 minutes during the peak periods, to every 5-10 minutes in off-peak periods. Service west of Humber Loop, including the redeveloping area of south Etobicoke, is half as frequent, with peak frequencies of approximately 10 minutes and off-peak frequencies of 10-20 minutes. An expanded Park Lawn Loop had been proposed in order to make it possible to extend the existing Humber Loop short-turn on 501 Queen further west and to, thus, bring more-frequent service to the high-density Humber Bay Shores community.

The Board’s recent approval of, and Council’s funding of several service-improvement initiatives, including the ten-minute-or-better service network -- including 501 Queen -- means that the scheduled turn-back of service at Humber Loop, on the western section of this route, will be eliminated. Instead, full service will operate along the entire length of this route from Neville Park to Long Branch, effective in 2016. Thus, the need and justification for a streetcar loop at Park Lawn/Lake Shore, as a new turnback for an extended short-turn branch of the 501 Queen route, no longer exists (outside of the

WWLRT project.) Unscheduled and emergency turnbacks will still be accommodated as needed at Humber Loop to the east and Kipling Loop to the west.

The Park Lawn streetcar loop, which included customer amenities and landscaping, was estimated to cost over \$17 million (\$2013). The TTC cannot justify this expenditure for a facility that would be used only sporadically for unscheduled turnbacks. It is, therefore, recommended that the Park Lawn streetcar loop be removed from the TTC's Capital Program, where it has been in the unfunded category since 2009.

### *Humber Loop*

Humber Loop will continue to be required, as an operational facility, to provide critical operational flexibility for streetcar operations, and to serve as a transfer location between the 501 Queen streetcar and the 66 Prince Edward and 80 Queensway bus routes. This facility has been showing its age for some time, so it would be desirable to investigate possible improvements to both the appearance and functionality of the loop. Such improvements could include replacement of the shelter and washrooms, improved pedestrian access, upgraded lighting, and the ability to accommodate more bus access options, including direct access to and from Lake Shore Boulevard. Funding to do a study of possible improvements has been included in the TTC's proposed 2016 Operating Budget, but there is presently no funding available for implementing improvements to this loop.

### *Closing the Right-of-way Gap*

A dedicated streetcar right-of-way currently exists on The Queensway between St. Joseph's Health Centre (Glendale Avenue) and Humber Loop. The WWLRT envisioned using this existing right-of-way and adding new right-of-way both to the east and the west of this existing section.

For the new section of this right-of-way west of Humber Loop on Lake Shore Boulevard, as far west as Park Lawn -- which was approved as part of the original WWLRT Environmental Assessment in 1994 -- the City of Toronto has been acquiring property on the south side of Lake Shore Boulevard through the redevelopment of the Humber Bay Shores neighbourhood. This will ultimately facilitate the eventual installation of a dedicated streetcar right-of-way between Humber Loop and Park Lawn Road. This dedicated right-of-way would not require relocation or reconstruction of the streetcar tracks, but will require widening of Lake Shore Boulevard to maintain traffic capacity. Not all of the required property has been acquired as there are some development parcels that are still going through the development-approval process.

Options for the other new section of WWLRT streetcar right-of-way, east of St. Joseph's Health Centre, were to run along the railway embankment or along Lake Shore Boulevard West, connecting to an already-approved alignment along the north side of Exhibition Place to the existing Exhibition Loop. Either of these alignments would provide a significantly-faster trip across the city's western waterfront compared to either

the 501 Queen or the 504 King streetcar routes. However, the environmental assessment of this section of the alignment was never completed nor approved. The WWLRT project was halted at the direction of then-Mayor Rob Ford and, subsequently, turned over to Metrolinx in 2010. It is not included in Metrolinx's "Next Wave" of projects. Planning for this section of the WWLRT alignment had not proceeded far enough to allow estimation of costs.

"Closing the gap" in the dedicated streetcar right-of-way, between Exhibition Place and St. Joseph's Health Centre, would require reactivating the WWLRT Environmental Assessment (EA). Based on the expected approval by City Council on November 3-4, 2015, City Planning and the Waterfront Secretariat are about to undertake a comprehensive Waterfront Transit "Reset" study, which will review the plans for longer-term improvements to transit across the eastern, central, and western waterfront. This study will include consideration of the WWLRT.

#### *Alternative Streetcar Operational Improvements*

There are other means by which to achieve more-immediate improvements to streetcar operations in the South Etobicoke area. TTC staff, in co-operation with City staff, are currently working on the following initiatives to improve service on the 501 Queen route:

- 1) Implementation of the approved dedicated streetcar right-of-way on Lake Shore Boulevard West, between Humber Loop and Park Lawn Road, as soon as property acquisition is complete. This would improve streetcar operations west of Humber Loop. City Planning is about to undertake a Transportation Master Plan for the Park Lawn area, as directed by City Council. That study will review the planned Lake Shore Boulevard cross-section, including the dedicated streetcar right-of-way, and the potential for a new GO Station in proximity to the redeveloping Christie's Bakery site on the north side of Lake Shore Boulevard, in the context of the Metrolinx RER program. The study will also provide the opportunity to review the longer-term plans for the WWLRT and whether the Park Lawn Loop should continue to be protected as part of that project.
- 2) The existing west-to-north manual track switch at the Kipling Loop should be electrified to make this loop more functional for emergency turnbacks and to reduce associated delays.
- 3) On The Queensway, east of Glendale Avenue at St. Joseph's Health Centre, TTC and City Transportation Services staff are working on a redesign of the existing mixed-traffic portion of the streetcar tracks to create a dedicated right-of-way to eliminate delays to streetcars caused by motorists making eastbound left-turns at Glendale, the Health Centre driveway, Sunnyside Avenue, and Roncesvalles Avenue. The proposed design includes a normalisation of the intersection with Queen, King, and Roncesvalles to allow more-efficient traffic operations. New accessible streetcar platforms will also be provided.

- 4) A possible review of the aging Humber Loop to identify improvements such as upgraded shelters, washrooms, lighting, and pedestrian and transit vehicle access in order to make this loop more comfortable and functional for customers.
  
- 5) The Queen Street corridor, between Roncesvalles Avenue and Dufferin Street, could be a candidate for enhanced transit, pedestrian, and cycling realms, by implementing a road design similar to what now exists on Roncesvalles Avenue. The Roncesvalles design brings transit platforms out to the streetcar tracks at designated stops, allows for separated bicycle lanes, widens the pedestrian sidewalks, and provides 24-hour dedicated on-street parking bays. Although streetcars continue to operate in mixed traffic, the experience on Roncesvalles is that overall delays to transit are reduced and reliability is improved. The design also provides significant improvements to the cycling, pedestrian, and streetscaping realms, and establishes more space for restaurants, merchants and other commercial activities. In the absence of, or in advance of a WWLRT, this enhanced design on Queen Street could improve streetcar operations as far east as Dufferin, where relatively-minor track improvements could be made to connect to Exhibition Loop via Dufferin Street. Given the positive experience with this street design on Roncesvalles, the feasibility of a similar design on Queen Street should be considered by City Planning and City Transportation Services for further study.

## **Contact**

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