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Public

TO: ADMINISTRATIVE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MAY 12, 2005

FROM: INTERIM DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

SUBJECT: ST. JOHN EVANGELIST CATHOLIC SCHOOL
PORTABLE RECONFIGURATION AND PROPOSED
EXPANSION OF ADJACENT RAIL CORRIDOR AND SERVICES

Origin: Status report.

Executive Summary:

This report considers the need for portable accommodation, and the impact of the proposed expansion of the adjacent rail corridor, and recommends as follows:

1. That GO Transit, Transport Canada and SNC-Lavalin Engineers and Constructors Inc., as well as the City of Toronto, and the Ministry of Environment be advised that the Toronto Catholic District School Board has serious concerns and reservations about the proposed GO Transit Georgetown/CN Weston Subdivision Corridor Expansion (including the Air Rail Link) and its impact on St. John Evangelist Catholic School and the school community.
2. That GO Transit, Transport Canada and SNC-Lavalin Engineers and Constructors Inc. be advised that as a further mitigative measure to minimize the impacts of the project, the proponents provide funding for retrofitting the entire school building with replacement windows and classroom air conditioners, and unit ventilators for portables, where needed.
3. That the City of Toronto and CN be requested to waive minimum setback requirements as soon as possible in order that additional portables can be placed on site and all portables reconfigured to consolidate outdoor playspace.

3
request to strike by
Trustee
Christine Nuzziata.

Comment(s):

1. St. John Evangelist is located at 23 George Street in the Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue area (*Appendix "B"*). The school is situated on a relatively small site of approximately 1.9 acres. With a capacity of 282.5 and preliminary average daily enrolment for 2004/05 of 464.75, there are presently seven portables on site (*Appendix "C"*). From 1998/99 to 2004/05, average daily enrolment has fluctuated within the range of 453 to 488. Enrolment projections indicate a gradual decline over the long term.

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2. The 2004/05 Capital Program has allocated \$150,000 for comprehensive portable reconfiguration at St. John Evangelist. The purpose of strategically and efficiently reconfiguring the portables is to create a consolidated, more useful playground and at the same time facilitate supervision of students. The present configuration of portables in single formation does not make efficient use of the school site.
3. Two options for portable reconfiguration are under discussion and consideration at this time by staff, the School Principal and the Board's consultant. One option involves replacing five of the seven existing portables, adding five more portables, and reconfiguring the 12 portables in clustered groups of 3 and 6 (*Appendix "D"*). The second option involves replacing five of the existing seven portables, adding three more portables, and arranging portables in single formation.
4. Both options will require site plan approval from the City of Toronto as well as a Committee of Adjustment Hearing for a minor variance of the zoning by-law as a result of the additional portables requested and the setback requirements associated with the adjacent rail corridor. The Board's consultant has submitted the required documents to the City for consideration.
5. At the same time as ongoing discussions with the City regarding portable reconfiguration, Go Transit announced it is initiating an environmental assessment for expansion of commuter rail service in the GO Georgetown/CN Weston Subdivision Corridor, which extends from Bathurst Street to the East of Bramalea GO Station. The proposed undertaking is to provide infrastructure improvements to accommodate:
 - increased GO train service;
 - the proposed new Air Rail Link (ARL) rail service between downtown Toronto (Union Station) and Pearson International Airport; and
 - will include future capacity for CN, CP and VIA services.
6. The proponents of this project include: GO Transit, Transport Canada and SNC-Lavalin Engineers and Constructors Inc..
7. The proposed undertaking will be subject to a class environmental assessment process under Provincial legislation, as well as a review process under Federal legislation.
8. The school site is situated to the west of, and lies adjacent to the rail corridor (*Appendix "B"*), at grade.

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9. The existing rail infrastructure consists of 3 mainline tracks, the westerly track owned by CN and the two easterly tracks owned by CP. The Weston GO Station is located at Lawrence Avenue. There are three at-grade rail crossings in the vicinity of St. John Evangelist; at Church Street, King Street and John Street. The CN line is presently used by GO Transit and VIA Rail, as well as CN freight trains. There are presently a combined total of 50 trains daily (Monday-Friday) in both directions operating on this stretch of the Georgetown rail corridor.

	<u># Trains</u>
GO	19
VIA	6
CN	4
CP	<u>21</u>
	50

10. The preferred solution for increasing service and capacity is the expansion of commuter rail service in the Georgetown rail corridor, including the provision of additional tracks. The proposed track infrastructure would include replacing the CN mainline track with three new tracks. The two CP mainline tracks would not be affected. It is not anticipated that any properties adjacent to the rail corridor will be required in order to provide new track. Proposed train service along this stretch of the rail corridor would total 207 trains per day (Monday-Friday) in both directions.

	<u># Trains</u>
GO	32
VIA	6
CN	4
CP	25
ARL	<u>140</u>
	207

11. With the proposed rail infrastructure improvements, Air Rail Link (ARL) service would be introduced. Initiated by the Federal Government's Transport Canada, this service would provide a rail link to Pearson International Airport from Union Station in downtown Toronto. ARL would share use of the CN tracks, and proposed service would consist of a total of 140 two-car trains daily (Monday-Friday) in both directions. As per criteria established by Transport Canada, ARL service will operate from 5:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. the following day, 365 days a year. Frequency of service will be every 15 to 30 minutes each way. Construction of the ARL project would be publicly and privately funded; operation of ARL service would only involve the private sector.

*incorrect
7 1/2 minutes*

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12. The proposed undertaking has the potential for severe adverse impacts on St. John Evangelist Catholic School in the following ways:
- health and safety of students and staff arriving, during and leaving school;
 - disruption to learning/teaching environment;
 - structural damage to school building;
 - replacement of school building (if and when this should occur);
 - future land value and development potential of site.
13. Transportation is provided to students living east of the rail corridor. Those living on the west side either walk to school or are driven to school. Closure of any of the at-grade road crossings (ie. Church St., King St., John St.) to vehicular traffic will tend to funnel traffic to the remaining open roads, thereby creating unsafe conditions for pedestrians and those that are dropping off/picking up children at school. School bus routes may need to be altered, which could affect arrival and departure times.
14. While at school, students and staff are presently exposed to the health/safety risks and negative impacts associated with the current rail infrastructure and level of service. The proposed undertaking will likely result in exposure to higher and more prolonged levels of risk.
- i) during construction
 - potential for traffic accidents, and higher levels of air and noise pollution, dust and vibration due to construction equipment and higher volume of trucks and other construction vehicles making deliveries and hauling materials/supplies
 - ii) after construction
 - cumulative impact of air and noise pollution on health and well-being
 - health effects will be exacerbated on days of smog alerts and poor air quality
 - dust and vibration
 - greater potential for train derailment; more critical if trains are transporting dangerous/hazardous materials.
15. Construction related activities will be disruptive to both the teaching and learning environment. Post construction train service will also be disruptive due to more frequent and hence, prolonged periods of noise and vibration.

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16. In light of the fact that St. John Evangelist is an older school (built in 1954, with an addition in 1966), with no air conditioning in the main building nor in the portables, the impacts on health and well-being, and the teaching/learning environment assume greater significance and concern. Serious concerns are also raised if a student or staff member suffers from a chronic respiratory condition such as asthma, or if the school has classes for mentally/physically challenged students.
17. Situated adjacent to the rail corridor, and given its age, the school building and its foundations would be susceptible to structural or physical damage as a result of vibration from construction activities and from increased train service.
18. If the school is to be rebuilt at some point in the future, the size, height and configuration of the building would likely be constrained by minimum set-back requirements, and would likely be costlier to build as a result of noise abatement and structural features that need to be included in the design.
19. The proposed undertaking will also likely have a detrimental effect on the development potential of the site (should it be sold and used for other purposes), and consequently, a reduction in land value.
20. As a mitigative measure to address the community's concerns with respect to safety, increased noise levels, derailment, vibration and road closures, it is proposed that the new CN tracks be lowered approximately 8 metres below grade. The new CN tracks, from Lawrence Ave. at the south end to Weston Rd. at the north end, would essentially lie in a trench. The proponents maintain that this would minimize impacts to properties along the rail corridor. This trench concept would ensure that expropriation would not be necessary, and that Church St. and King St. remain open (to vehicular and pedestrian traffic) as community links across the rail corridor. John Street would remain open to pedestrian traffic only.
21. For the time spent indoors by students and staff, some of the negative impacts that may result from the proposed undertaking could be minimized through the design and construction of a new school building. However, funds are not available for a replacement building.
22. As a further mitigative measure to minimize the negative impacts on St. John Evangelist Catholic School, the proponents should provide funding for classroom air conditioners and replacement windows for the entire school, and unit ventilators for portables, where needed.

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23. Being an extremely sensitive form of land use and due to the elementary school's location immediately adjacent to the rail corridor, the potential health risks associated with long term exposure to increased levels of air and noise pollution and the continuous disruption to the teaching and learning environment, the proposed undertaking should be "bumped-up" and subjected to the more rigorous scrutiny of an individual environmental assessment. This request should be made if the Board's concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, after the Environmental Study Report has been prepared and released for public review and comment. The period for review and comment is 45 days. A second public information centre will be held prior to the preparation of the Environmental Study Report. The second public information centre will consider:
- analysis and evaluation of conceptual design alternatives;
 - details of the preferred alternatives;
 - proposed mitigation measures; and
 - public comments and suggestions.
24. In order to proceed with portable reconfiguration at St. John Evangelist to provide needed accommodation for September 2005 and to consolidate outdoor playspace, the City and CN should be requested to waive minimum setback requirements as soon as possible.

Recommendation:

1. That GO Transit, Transport Canada and SNC-Lavalin Engineers and Constructors Inc., as well as the City of Toronto, and the Ministry of Environment be advised that the Toronto Catholic District School Board has serious concerns and reservations about the proposed GO Transit Georgetown/CN Weston Subdivision Corridor Expansion (including the Air Rail Link) and its impact on St. John Evangelist Catholic School and the school community.
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3. That the City of Toronto and CN be requested to waive minimum setback requirements as soon as possible in order that additional portables can be placed on site and all portables reconfigured to consolidate outdoor playspace.

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