

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

May 12, 2005

To: Planning and Transportation Committee
From: Chief Planner and General Manager, City Planning
Subject: GO Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Corridor Rail Expansion-Environmental Assessment

Purpose:

To respond to City Council's Direction of May 4, 2005 regarding the Environmental Assessment (E.A.) currently being conducted for the Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Rail Corridor.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications arising from his report.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- (1) City Council direct staff to report on the results of the GO Transit Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Corridor Rail Expansion – Environmental Assessment following the completion of the current E.A. Study.

Background:

On October 1 and 2, 1998, City of Toronto Council adopted the recommendations in a staff report dated June 26, 1998 titled "A Rapid Transit Connection Between Pearson International Airport and Union Station". At that time, City Council:

- endorsed the concept of a rapid transit connection between Pearson International Airport and Union Station;
- supported upgrading of the Weston Rail Corridor for all-day GO service from Union Station to a new station in the vicinity of Woodbine Racetrack;
- supported the extension of the internal airport transit system from the airport to upgraded GO rail service in the CN Weston rail corridor;

- requested Transport Canada, in conjunction with the City of Toronto, Ministry of Transportation, GO Transit, the GTTA, Region of Peel and the City of Mississauga, to conduct a physical, operational and financial feasibility study for the extension
- requested the Province and GO Transit to ensure that the upgrading of the CN Weston corridor for all-day GO service to the airport is a high priority for GO expansion
- requested the Mayor and Chair of Urban Environment and Development Committee to meet with the Federal Minister of Transport to discuss Federal support for the feasibility study and for early implementation of the rapid transit connection.
- Council's support of the above was conditional upon the project including a portion of the financial cost of the required upgrades to the subway platform at Union Station.

More recently, City Council, on April 12, 13, 14, 2005 adopted a motion that no streets be closed, as a result of the expansion of service in the rail corridor. In addition, City Council, on May 4, 2005, requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with appropriate City Officials, to report to Council for its meeting on June 14, 2005, through the Planning and Transportation Committee, with detailed information on:

- 1) any complete or partial closings of roadways which are being proposed as a result of the GO Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Corridor;
- 2) the establishment of a station in Weston and a tunnelled alignment through Weston; and
- 3) any legal requirement that would necessitate a bump-up of the GO Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Corridor Environmental Assessment.

Current Environmental Assessment Studies

GO Transit has started an E.A. for the expansion of commuter rail service in the GO Georgetown/Weston Corridor. To date, SNC Lavolin has undertaken the E.A. study on behalf of GO Transit. The Union Pearson AirLink Group (UPAG) is undertaking a separate Federal E.A. for the Air Rail Link line. Originally, both E.A.'s were expected to be complete this Fall (2005). Given the amount of public interest in this project, the original schedule will likely be extended.

UPAG is responsible for costs associated with operation of the Air Rail Link service, and the design and construction of the Airport Spur Line.

GO Transit is a stakeholder in the Air Rail Link because GO owns and is responsible for the management, operation and maintenance of the Union Station Rail Corridor, and operates service along the Georgetown Weston Sub-Division.

City staff is working on the technical advisory committee for the E.A. Study

Comments:

On May 10, 2005, staff from City Planning and Transportation Services met with the Managing Director of GO Transit and his senior staff, a Provincial representative and Transport Canada staff (by way of conference call connection) to discuss the current E.A. Study.

The following addresses the three specific areas requested by City Council at the May 5, 2005 meeting.

1) Road Closures:

Currently there are nine at-grade crossings along the subject rail corridor. Seven of these at-grade crossings are located in the City of Toronto. These crossings: Strachan Avenue, Denison Road, Church Street, King Street, John Street, Carlingview Drive and a path crossing at Weston Golf Course are all being assessed in the current E.A. Options being assessed range from closing of all crossings to grade separating all crossings.

At the first public meeting held on March 6, 2005, John Street, Church Street and King Street were all proposed to be closed. This proposal was adamantly objected to by the residents and businesses in Weston.

To date, the E.A. Study has concluded that Strachan Avenue and Denison Road will be grade separated. A proposal to address the existing at-grade crossings at Church Street, King Street, John Street was presented to the public at a public meeting held on April 28, 2005. The proposal called for the rail alignment to be depressed in a trench allowing for the continued vehicular connection at Church Street and King Street and a pedestrian connection at John Street. The at-grade crossing at Carlingview and the cart path crossing at Weston Golf Course are still being assessed.

2) Establishment of a station in Weston and a tunnelled alignment through Weston:

The existing GO Transit station at Weston will be maintained. The station will be rebuilt and shifted slightly from its current location to straddle Lawrence Avenue and provide direct connections to both sides of the corridor. An Air-Rail Link station stop is not planned for Weston. The only planned stops on the Air Rail Link are at Pearson Airport, Bloor-Danforth subway and Union Station. A possible station stop could be added at Woodbine Racetrack depending on future demand.

A tunnel section through the Weston area, as recommended by Council on May 4, 2005, would require the tunnel section to run from Denison Road to Lawrence Avenue. GO Transit has estimated that a tunnel of this magnitude would cost in the order of \$500Million. Due to the prohibitive costs associated with a tunnel, GO Transit staff does not recommend this solution.

3. Any legal requirement that would necessitate a bump up of the GO Georgetown/Weston Sub-Division Corridor Environmental Assessment:

City Legal staff were consulted on this matter and it is our opinion that requests to "bump-up" a Class E.A. to an Individual E.A. are properly dealt with at the end of the E.A. process following the filing of the E.A. document on the public record with the Minister of Environment. To date, the E.A. proponents have received considerable input from the public. GO Transit staff has indicated that their consultant will be addressing and assessing the issues raised. GO staff has

also indicated that they will be holding the next round of Community meetings in the Fall of 2005 at which time they will be reporting on the issues and suggested alternatives raised to date.

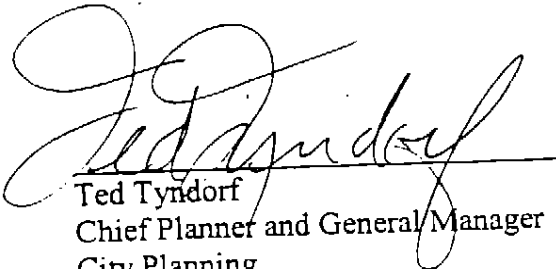
GO Transit staff has also indicated that they will be conducting an assessment of alternatives to the undertaking as part of the current E.A. This was not originally proposed as part of the current E.A. GO Transit staff will also be opening a Neighbourhood Project Office in Weston to allow all interested parties to drop-in to ask questions, receive answers and discuss the study as it progresses through the E.A. process.

Conclusions:

The completion of the Georgetown/Weston Environmental Assessment is very important to the continued improvement and delivery of GO Transit service in the Greater Toronto Area. City Council has in past supported and encouraged improved commuter rail service including an airport link in the Georgetown/Weston rail corridor. City staff will continue to work with the study team and report to City Council on the findings of the Environmental Assessment, including any implications to the City, when the E.A. has been completed and filed on the public record for review. The information and input provided to the E.A. proponents to date has been very extensive and will require time to address before going back to the public in the Fall of this year.

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The study area for the Georgetown/Weston EA covers the CN Weston Subdivision between Union Station and East of Bramalea GO Station (approximately 24.5 km), with 3.2 km link to the airport.

