

Exhibition Traffic Workshop CLC MINUTES

July 17, 2024

5:30 - 7:30 p.m. (In person)

BIAs/Community Groups/Non-Profit Organizations/Residents

- Ellen Lai
- Elijah Johnson
- Stephanie McEwan
- Heidi Kurien
- Robert Howley
- Renato Lorini
- Ross Howey
- Vitha Sivatharman
- Jane Silkos
- Chris Fraser
- Chris Atkins
- Serena
- Abhi Kathuria
- Ellen V
- Aaron Silverberg
- Leonel Lopez
- Michael Przybylowski
- Zenato Gallini
- Sep Jelveh

City of Toronto

- Louie Lenti
- Sheikh Alam
- Terry Francoeur
- Nazli Dehghani
- Vienna O'Shea
- Michael Paolucci
- DM Ausma Malik

Metrolinx

- Yiewan Yan
- Saikat Basak
- Mohamed El Hendy
- James Francis
- Ross Andersen
- Mark Clancy
- Bradley Naismith
- Franca DiGiovanni

OTG

- Shane Adams
- Allison Dewhirst
- Emanuel Gameiro
- Garrick McIntosh
- Heather DeLapp
- Gina Torres

OVERVIEW:

On July 17, 2024, Metrolinx, in collaboration with Ontario Transit Group (OTG), held a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) meeting to inform residents about Ontario Line construction at the future Exhibition sites. This is a monthly CLC meeting to be held about ongoing construction progress at this specific future station. A follow-up to a previous meeting held in May 2024, this CLC had a specific focus on traffic management through Liberty Village, taking into consideration the ingress and egress routes that will be needed to accommodate the 3 work zones in relation to Exhibition Station: the portal/tunnel area, the new station area, and the retention wall area.

The meeting assembled representatives from Metrolinx, OTG, the City of Toronto, and community groups were present. An overview of the Ontario Line project and Exhibition construction progress was shared, followed by a focused presentation and discussion about potential construction routes for the project. Six specific potential routes to access the future portal/tunnel construction work zone were highlighted. Conversations highlighted concerns with safety, coordination of other projects and traffic in the neighbourhood and impacts to both residential and commercial sides of the Liberty Village community.

Attendees requested further examination of potential routes utilizing Exhibition Place, as well as consideration of infrastructure upgrades in the neighbourhood, such as advancement of upgrades to the Dufferin Bridge. The meeting adjourned with agreement to reconvene the group for further discussion in August 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSION:

A fulsome conversation on traffic concerns took place in this meeting, with attendees sharing feedback on proposed routes for the Ontario Line project, in addition to raising broader issues such as congestion on Liberty Village, impacts of other capital projects in the area, and the challenges of balance of interests from residential and commercial areas of the neighbourhood.

Key areas of concern were also synthesized and captured in the meeting. The following summarizes the discussion and key points raised in more detail:

- Councilor Malik raised several questions and items for consideration during the meeting, including:
 - Collaboration with Exhibition Place, requesting further engagement and discussion of use of Exhibition Place lands for construction routes
 - The forthcoming implement of a Traffic Action Plan for Liberty Village
 - The City of Toronto housing crisis, noting more neighbours are being invited to the Liberty Village neighbourhood, with new development at Ordance and East Liberty.
 - The use of innovative solutions at other projects, such as a Portlands project that used boats to remove soils instead of trucks. The need to be mindful of Exhibition Place events such as the CNE, concerts, the Royal Winter Fair, and others.
 - Consideration of impacts to FIFA 2026, and the importance of coordinating impacts with this event, and other events planned for the neighbourhood.

- Several attendees expressed concern about the coordination and impact of other capital projects in the neighbourhood, noting significant traffic congestion in the area.
 - Attendees expressed concern about the use of main arteries in the neighbourhood such as East Liberty Street, Dufferin Street and Strachan Avenue in relation to existing gridlock in the area, however collectively acknowledged that an option must be selected.
 - The membership identified there are different concerns to consider between the residential and commercial sides of Liberty Village, noting the current traffic situation is impacting.
 - An attendee asked about the impact of Ontario Line project workers on neighbourhood traffic, noting if project workers are driving to the neighbourhood it adds pressure to the existing situation.
 - A resident commented that the integrated traffic management plan can't be solved without representation from the City of Toronto Gardiner Project, and the City of Toronto King Street West Project, and requested all parties at the table to discuss.

- Questions and comments were provided on the presented routes:
 - The community requested additional discussion and consideration of alternatives, such as utilizing the rail corridor or Exhibition Place lands, the rail corridor, or Ordnance Park, prior to selecting a preferred route.
 - In relation to the Strachan Gate option, a resident noted that they live in the area and expressed concerns that any additional vehicles on Strachan Avenue will cause more gridlock for the neighborhood. They also expressed concern the plan would remove the westbound turn lane from Strachan to East Liberty, as well as TTC bus operations interference.
 - A resident requested clarity surrounding the temporary Dufferin Bridge replacement, noting that it would assist with adding additional trucking routes. The residents voiced their concern on behalf of the community that the Strachan Gate option is not their preferred approach.
 - The Dufferin Bridge(s) are a City of Toronto project. Metrolinx will continue to explore all options to ensure community safety.
 - In relation to Hanna and Pirandello options, a resident asked if any lane closures would be implemented strictly for trucks.
 - Metrolinx clarified the location of the Pirandello exit and the need to move on to East Liberty Street, with vehicles heading west. The reasoning is that traffic density increases when you go east - which is the foundation for the traffic planning (fundamentally avoiding the residential area of Liberty Village.

- A resident noted that language specificity is important for total volume; nothing that 300 dump truck movements (combining in and out) totals 600 movements.
 - Metrolinx noted that difference between option Atlantic, Hanna and Pirandello Avenues compared to Strachan Gate is that with the first 3 options - 600 total trucks are coming on to East Liberty Street/Liberty Street. With the Strachan Gate option, we're avoiding half the trucks coming directly into the neighborhood, alleviating constraint. The turning options (continuous truck loop) were also reiterated, and Strachan Gate would also leverage flag persons for added safety.
- Meeting members requested more consideration of the various options.

Top issues of concerned raised by the broader CLC group include:

- Safety concerns are directly related to the existing condition of traffic.
- Traffic control persons being needed on site.
- Wider truck circulation in and out of Liberty Village.
- Examination of more alternative traffic routes.
- Additional projects and partners needing to attend the meetings
- Additional condos and density add more congestion.
- Coordinating among projects
- Exhibition place circulation and events impacting the livability and walkability of Liberty Village.
- Safety for cyclists.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Metrolinx will account for the CLC feedback in relation to ongoing traffic management planning for the Ontario Line. Another follow up CLC will be scheduled in August 2024.
- Metrolinx to share Exhibition Traffic Management presentation online, through Metrolinx.com, with all attendees after the meeting.
- Metrolinx to confirm next steps regarding traffic management in Liberty Village, with an understanding that the public and City would like us to provide another presentation to go over the above points in more details, including preferred approach and additional validation and research.

APPENDIX

Specific to truck routes:

- The community shared concern about the use of Strachan Avenue (Strachan Gate), because of the congestion at the intersection of Strachan Avenue and East Liberty. Also, residents were concerned that the west-bound turn lane from Strachan Avenue north would be lost (due to truck queuing) and TTC bus operations interference. Residents requested a more thorough review of the options.
 - Metrolinx reassured the community that the ongoing options presented consider the concerns by priority and then assess them all, while finding a need to balance a lot of competing factors - time, cost, building, traffic.
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- A business representative asked whether the Lakeshore West rail line can be leveraged to haul away soil and rock, in place of trucks.
- A resident commented that the integrated traffic management plan can't be solved without representation from the City of Toronto Gardiner Project, and the City of Toronto King Street West Project, and requested all parties at the table to discuss.
- A resident asked if the extracted soil and rock from the Ontario Line tunnel could be transported over the Lakeshore West rail corridor and on to Ontario place, via conveyor belt.
 - Metrolinx affirmed that it will continue to examine options with adjacent stakeholders.
- A Strachan Bridge/Ordnance Park option was proposed to account for trucks using the rail corridor to access the portal site. The suggestion involved the creation of a ramp so trucks can cross over on the tracks to get around, and that rubber tires won't damage the rails, leveraging flag persons.
 - Metrolinx replied by committing to examine rail frequencies on Track 1, and if it could accommodate truck movement traversing the line between trains.
- Allied Properties asked if there has there been any thought to have a freight train that sits idle in the first track and haul by train, instead of by truck? Additionally, where would it transport the loads? E.g. bypass track.
 - Metrolinx responded that a survey was done for the track in the area, including the space needed to load safely without interfering with existing GO Transit operations.

Specific questions and comments related to neighborhood event and construction issues include:

- A resident noted that with the business & hospitality in Liberty Village, delivery and service trucks are also needed for suppliers, etc. There's a lot of traffic needing to quickly come in and out, not only impacting residential areas of the neighbourhood.

- A resident noted that there is a high level of frustration from the community about traffic, suggesting it is causing some people to move away, and also creating an issue for emergency response in the area.
- York Heritage Properties noted that the business community is feeling the effects of gridlock, with a loss of potential prospects trying to lease space to and can't access the community due to impassable traffic.
- A resident openly inquired as to how many condos are up for preconstruction, and asked if there was a City of Toronto moratorium on these projects?
- Liberty Village BIA (LVBIA) pointed out that the community hosts 600+ businesses which are being impacted. Tenants are being lost. The companies are trying to bring back on-site workers to offices, and it's a frustrating process due to congestion. LVBIA also noted that other stakeholders need to be on this CLC table, specifically:
 - City of Toronto (CoT) - watermain work
 - Exhibition Place
 - GO Transit (King-Liberty station)
- A resident noted that annual events hosted locally, (MLS, Honda Indy, Ontario Place, CNE, Concerts), etc., are directing parking to Liberty Village.
 - Metrolinx acknowledged that there is a great deal of ongoing construction here, as well as events that draw from out of town, and we need to be considerate of this as we plan.
- LVBIA asked about King-Liberty Station; it will bring more traffic and possible soil contamination.
 - Metrolinx responded saying environmental testing and standards are already in place for soils removal.
- A resident questioned the City of Toronto project, Liberty New Street, how it would function connected to Strachan Avenue and if this street be expedited to help serve Ontario Line construction.
- A resident noted that Liberty Village is a fun place to live, work and play. But visitors are now afraid to come into the village; afraid of getting hurt (by traffic) coming around the corner anywhere around East Liberty Street. It's dangerous to cross through here.

- A resident A stakeholder asked about the 2026 FIFA World Cup, specifically what is the plan in relation to construction?
 - Metrolinx detailed that 15 working groups established, with two to three Metrolinx representatives at each meeting. This is an ongoing planning process.
 - A resident asked whether the construction will be halting during FIFA, also the World Cup Fan Fest.
 - A resident commented that BMO Field is also going to be improved for FIFA, and asked what's that construction is going to look like and how does that impact the neighbourhood.