

June 3, 2006

Bruce Whidden

The Air Rail Link Environmental Assessment (EA) is proceeding with input and advice from the Weston Community Coalition. GO Transit is leading a two-pronged EA. One part will look at the GO Transit Georgetown Corridor improvements to all-day service. The other will look at determining the best route and technology for an 'express transportation link' between Pearson and downtown Toronto. The first stage is to develop 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) for the studies. These will describe in detail what will be studied and how it will be measured. So, it will describe what aspects of the natural and socio-economic environments will be studied, in what detail, and how it will be measured. It will also have an outline of which potential routes will be studied, from the Eglinton Avenue route, to the 427 and QEW/Gardiner, to the hydro corridor in Etobicoke, and others, including of course the route through Weston originally called 'Blue 22'. The ToR is not the actual study, but rather a kind of blueprint for how the study will proceed.

GO has chosen to create a 'Public Liaison Committee' (PLC) which is to give input from the public to their preparation of the ToR. For example, the PLC has suggested to GO that the word 'express' implies no stops, and we have requested that GO change the study to be a 'rapid transportation link' between Pearson and downtown. The PLC is not a decision making body, but rather a consultative one. It has representation from a wide array of interested parties. GO Transit has deliberately invited the Toronto Board of Trade, the Convention Association, and the Hotel Association to be part of the PLC, although these groups have never attended. They have also invited Business Improvement Associations (BIA) and Ratepayer groups from within the study area. Also the 'Friends of Fort York' have been invited.

At the first PLC meeting, the Weston Historical Society and the Weston Heritage Conservation Association were permitted to be part of the PLC. However, apparently as a result of a complaint from another area that Weston was too heavily represented, GO Transit uninvited these Weston Groups. After much back and forth, GO relented and allowed one to attend. Elizabeth Hill, the school trustee from the Weston Area, also attended the first meeting, but was uninvited to the second. GO has determined not to allow elected politicians to be part of the PLC. Those 'uninvitees', and in fact any member of the public is welcome to attend the PLC meetings, but they will not be allowed a voice except to ask one question or make one point at the end of the meeting.

Additionally, GO will be consulting with any person, group or association which has indicated a wish to be consulted. And GO has created behind-the-scenes technical advisory committees, which apparently will consult with the City, the Railroads, School Boards, etc.

There is one more PLC meeting (June 8) before GO brings its draft ToR to the general public. The public will be invited to one of three 'Public Information Centres' including one here in Weston, on June 21. This Public Information Centre will be the your opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference and give your feedback to GO Transit on whether you think the ToR will adequately study the problem and deal with your environmental issues. Once that feedback has been documented and any final changes made, the ToR will be presented to the Minister of Environment for approval.

Later this fall, the real study will begin, and GO plans more PLC meetings at the various stages of the study, along with more Public Information Centres. We will continue to be actively involved, and will keep you apprised of any developments.

Mike Sullivan
Chair
Weston Community Coalition