

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

May 19, 2006

To: City Council

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

Subject: Planned Busway, Downsview Subway Station to York University

Purpose:

At its meeting on April 27, 2006, the Administration Committee adopted the recommendations of the report entitled, "York University Bus-Only Roadway", and requested that, "... the Chief Corporate Officer, in consultation with staff as appropriate, report directly to City Council outlining how the more recent events with respect to provincial and federal involvement in the subway construction will affect this report." This report responds to that request.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The cost of construction and operation of the busway will be funded by the Toronto Transit Commission and is included in the TTC's 2006-2010 Capital Budget as approved by Council in December, 2005.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Background:

The main transit service currently available between Downsview Subway Station and York University is the 196 YORK UNIVERSITY ROCKET. This route is one of the busiest in the TTC network, carrying approximately 12,000 passengers per day, with service as frequent as every 2½ minutes. However, the service is slow and unreliable due to chronic traffic congestion, which makes the service unattractive. A one-way trip on this route is supposed to take 18-20 minutes but, in reality, it often takes up to a half hour because buses get stuck in stop-and-go traffic.

The busway that is planned between Downsview Subway Station and York University (see Figure 1, attached) will dramatically improve the reliability and speed of the 196 YORK UNIVERSITY ROCKET by separating this service from other traffic and the associated congestion and delays. When the busway is in operation, the one-way trip will be reduced down

to 13 minutes and, since the service will be separated from traffic congestion, the route will be able to reliably deliver this faster and improved service.

The busway will also provide a reliable, high-speed connection to the subway for York Region's VIVA service and for GO Transit, both of whom are planning to take advantage of the busway for their services.

There will be significant increases in travel in this corridor resulting from ongoing development in York Region and from expansion of the York University campus. This will cause the number of travellers to increase to a projected 20,000 per day over the next 10-to-15 years. Transit here must be more competitive and attractive if we wish to convince this growing travel market to leave their cars at home and use transit instead. The busway will dramatically improve the speed and reliability of bus services operating on it, and this will create significant additional carrying capacity on these bus routes at no additional cost. By operating faster, these same buses can complete more round trips within the same amount of time and, therefore, they can carry more people per hour. The additional capacity which will be created on TTC routes with the busway in place is equivalent to approximately \$1 million in annual operating costs.

It is conceivable that the subway could still be at least 10 years from completion. The TTC Commission has directed that the busway, on the other hand, be constructed and operational by 2008/2009.

Comments:

The busway between Downsview Subway Station and York University will provide an immediate and practical improvement which will allow the TTC, York Region, and GO Transit to provide faster and more-reliable service in this corridor in advance of the subway, and which will establish a rapid-transit ridership pattern in support of the subway;

When the subway extension is in place, local bus services will continue to use the busway to bypass chronic traffic congestion and provide customers with more-reliable and faster service. There are four TTC routes which are expected to continue to make use of the busway, and these are shown in Figure 2, attached:

- 1). 117 ALNESS: This bus route serves the industrial/commercial area on the west side of Dufferin Street, south of Steeles Avenue West. This service now operates via Dufferin Street/Allen Road and connects to the subway at Downsview Station. With the subway extension in operation, this route would use the busway in order to connect with the new Finch West Subway Station.
- 2). 107 KEELE NORTH: This bus service serves the industrial/commercial area west of Dufferin Street/Allen Road, between Sheppard Avenue and Finch Avenue, and currently operates via Finch Avenue and Keele Street, north of Finch Avenue. This route would be modified to make use of the busway as shown in Figure 2.

- 3). 36 FINCH WEST: A branch of this route could use the busway to avoid chronic traffic congestion which is characteristic of Finch Avenue West.
- 4). 105 DUFFERIN NORTH: This bus service operates from north of Steeles Avenue via Dufferin Street connecting with Downsview Subway Station. This route would continue to use the busway in order to take advantage of the bus-only lanes on Allen Road and the more-efficient bus entrance into Downsview Station which is part of the busway facility.

The City of Toronto Official Plan designates the hydro corridor, north of Finch Avenue, for a higher-order transit service across the northern section of Toronto. The bus-only roadway which will be built in this corridor as part of this busway is the first stage of this facility. It is expected that this busway will be expanded to the east and west as part of a larger high-speed transit facility across the northern part of the city.

Finally, the agreement with York University was requested by the University as an assurance that the section of the busway on their property would be removed after ten years of operation. However, this bus-only roadway is located through a section of York University's property which is designated for development and, it is possible that, in the future, the University could choose to modify the roadway and convert it to local use as part of the master plan for the campus property. This decision, however, would be at the discretion of the University.

This report has been prepared in consultation with TTC staff and the office of the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer and Chief Corporate Officer.

Conclusions:

The busway that is going to be built between Downsview Station and York University is an important and pragmatic solution to the need for more-reliable and faster transit service to meet the already-large and growing travel demands in the Spadina Subway - Keele Street - York University - York Region corridor. This busway can be constructed within 2-3 years and will provide immediate and significant improvements in transit service prior to the opening of the subway which, itself, will likely be ten or more years to complete. The more-immediate improvements to transit service which will be provided by the busway will be instrumental in retaining and attracting more travellers to transit in this growing travel market.

When the subway extension is in operation, there are four TTC bus routes which would continue to make use of the busway in addition to any continued use which might be made by GO Transit and York Region/VIVA transit services. The section of the busway within the hydro corridor will constitute the first phase of a larger east-west higher-order transit service identified for that corridor in the City of Toronto's Official Plan.

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List of Attachments:

Figures 1 and 2

Figures 1 & 2

Figure 1

Downsview Station - York University Busway

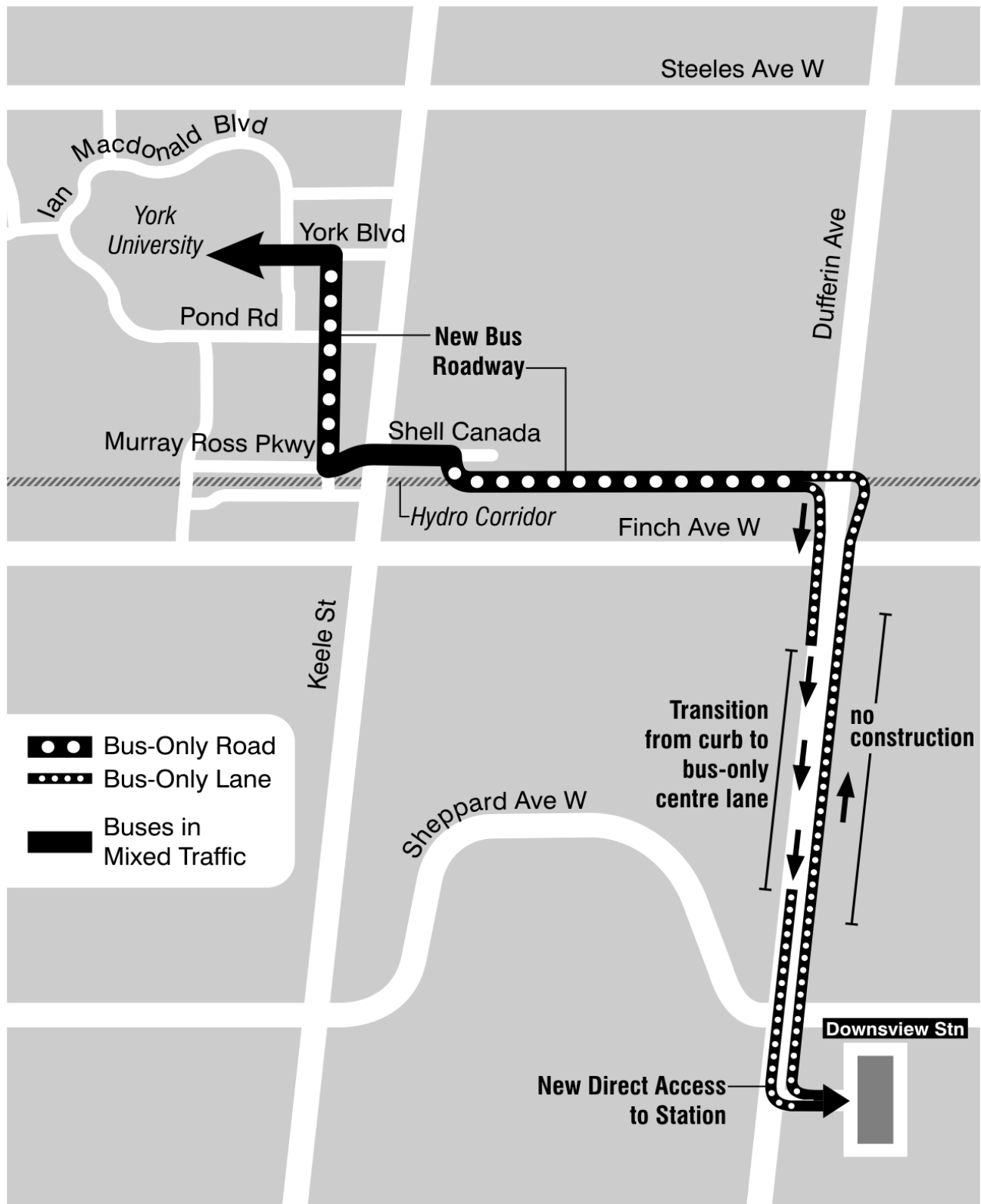


Figure 2

Future Use of Busway with Subway in Operation

