

YONGE STREET PROJECT: FROM DAVIS DRIVE TO GREEN LANE

COLLIERS REPORT — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

To meet the demands of all travellers in this growing community and infrastructure upgrades, the Regional Municipality of York is improving Yonge Street from Davis Drive to Green Lane, in the Town of Newmarket and Town of East Gwillimbury. This multi-year project will support growth along this busy corridor while creating an efficient, safer and attractive roadway for travellers – whether driving, walking, cycling or taking transit.

Improvements include:

- Road widening from four lanes to six lanes, including High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes
- Upgrading five traffic-signal controlled intersections for enhanced accessibility, including audible pedestrian signals
- Installing new traffic signals at the plaza entrances to Yonge Street at Canadian Tire and the Yonge-Kingston Centre for improved access into businesses
- Relocating the traffic signals currently located at the intersection outside of Upper Canada Mall for better alignment of the road network for future growth
- Replacing existing sidewalks to wider sidewalks and bicycle paths within the boulevards on each side of Yonge Street
- Installing new street lighting using more sustainable LED fixtures that save energy, create better nighttime visibility and make streets safer for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists
- Creating a centre median along Yonge Street to protect for future rapid transit, when needed and when funding becomes available
- Streetscaping in the boulevards and centre median with trees, shrubs, and upgraded finishes to help achieve the vision for a vibrant, green and active place in the community

The Region is committed to delivering transportation improvements safely, while minimizing disruptions as best as possible. Using a conventional approach, the utility relocation was expected to take about two and a half years, and the road construction was expected to take another two and a half to three years.

Understanding that continued construction and the traffic delays caused by this work will be frustrating for residents living in this area and other users of the corridor, the Region engaged Colliers Project Leaders (Colliers) to independently assess opportunities to reduce impacts of construction on the community. The assessment included engaging residents and business owners through focus groups to gather feedback about construction timing and hours, duration of work and other factors that will affect this project.

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March 2021



Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether it is possible to reduce the overall project timeline and lessen the intensity and duration of impacts to residents, businesses and travellers.

The objectives were to consider measures to:

- Reduce the project implementation and delivery schedule and the amount of time we are in the corridor
- Minimize the disruption to the community (residents and businesses) and travelling public, which could include:
 - Optimizing when and where a contractor can perform the work
 - Minimizing short-term and prolonged/long-term lane closures
 - Maintaining continued access to businesses and other community sites during construction, particularly during peak business periods
 - Incorporating community feedback into the schedule
 - Accelerating or reducing the length of the work through extended working hours on weekends, statutory holidays, or at night
- Develop a model of collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement for future projects.

Changes in the design and construction of the proposed work was not within the scope of this study.

Conclusion

It is possible to complete the Yonge Street Project in less time and with less impact on residents, businesses, and the travelling public, if the project proceeds according to the proposed plan.

The original plan projected a combined utility relocation and construction duration of five to five and a half years. The proposed plan would allow the total construction to be completed in just over four and a half years, saving about one year, and significantly reducing the periods of greatest impact on residents, businesses and the travelling public.

It is important to note the success of this schedule could still be hampered by several factors including:

- Adverse weather
- Resource constraints (labour, materials and equipment)
- Impacts of the prevailing pandemic
- Unforeseen site conditions (such as poor soils and utility conflicts)
- Other impacts to the community and costs to the project

Coordination of Utility Relocation

The Region has asked the utility companies to coordinate their work to overlap within the pre-determined schedule, while adhering to space concerns and health and safety requirements. To enable this coordination, the Region developed a combined utility relocation schedule, whereby each utility knows where and when they will be working in the corridor. Coordination is further enhanced by the communication utilities currently collaborating to hire a single contractor to construct a joint-use trench and civil works for all of them.

Completion of Utility Work

The Region has committed to including Newmarket Hydro's specifications into the contract and coordinating quality control and quality assurance activities during construction. Additionally, the Region's contractor could complete some utility work on behalf of other utilities. The Region's contractor would control work time and construction space, meeting health and safety requirements with minimal loss of time that normally occurs if each party has their contractor take turns. This approach is being pursued on this project.

Extend the Construction Time Window

The most significant reduction in construction duration could be achieved by completing some work during extended working hours at night or on weekends.

For this project, there is the potential to execute work at night because commercial properties flank a significant portion of the corridor that would not be disrupted by night construction. Business representatives strongly advocated to do as much night construction as possible, seven days a week. The one notable exception was the hotel representative, whose 24x7 year-round operation would be harmed if guests are disrupted by the noise of night work.

The extent of time savings that might be obtained through night construction is uncertain and will depend on the capacity and interest of the construction industry.

Consideration should be given to some night work or to working extended hours as a mechanism for reducing the duration of the project where the impact on residential areas can be mitigated and the slight increase in costs can be justified.

The potential to make even more time available for construction by continuing work through the winter was considered as an option to reduce the duration of construction. However, only the tasks most sensitive to winter construction were available to be undertaken during the winter. As a result, we do not see any value in winter construction for this project.

For more information, please contact Project Manager, Jamal Ahmed, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75955 or jamal.ahmed@york.ca